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Masons launch drive to feed the hungry

See story on page 28

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QUOTE OF NOTE:

"It's always good to talk with other mayors about ways we can work together to our mutual benefit." - *Mayor Roy Zartarian*

See story page 9

ON THE COVER

Worshipful Master Steve Gorman and Junior Warden Lee Martin show some of the donations they have collected so far for the Mason's annual October Food Drive.

Photo by Lisa Brisson
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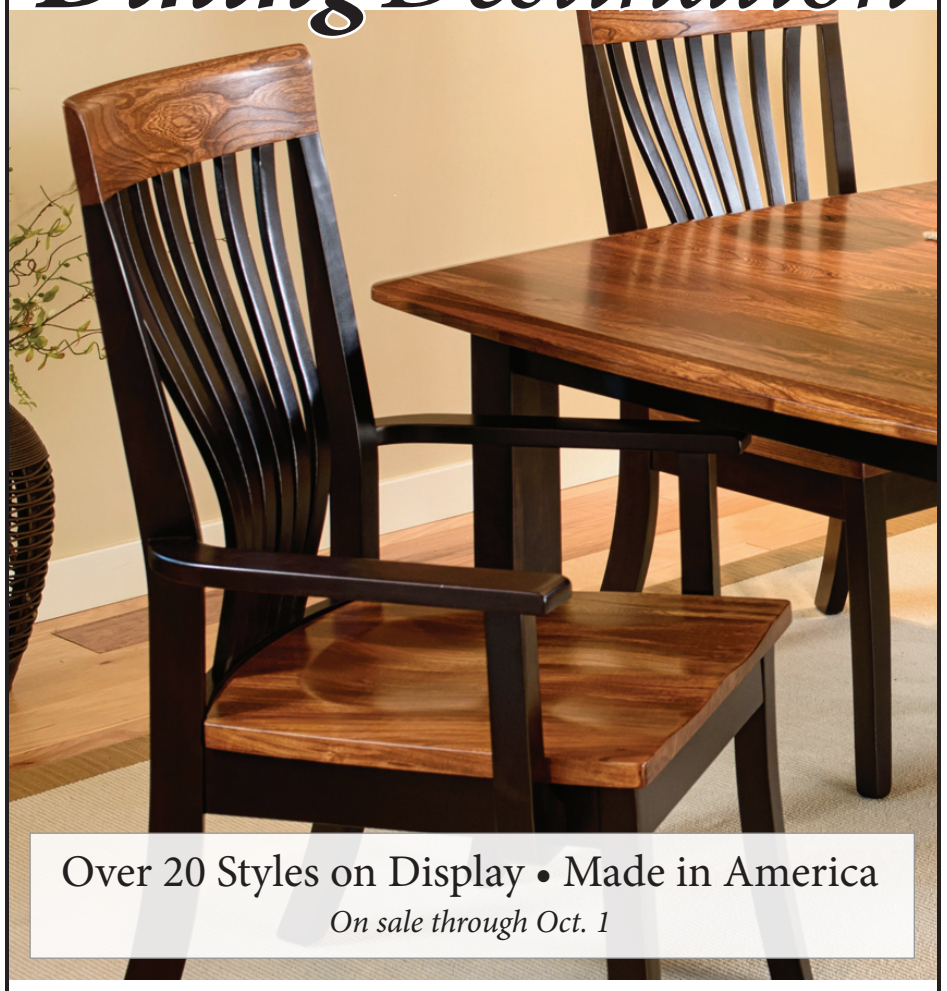

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Lending a helping paw

Newington native starts initiative to help Connecticut animal shelters

by Allie Rivera
Staff Writer

Photo by Allie Rivera

Patty Gosselin, the office assistant at Newington Veterinary Clinic, has begun efforts to collect material donations for no-kill animal shelters around the state. This is followed by a hike with her beloved dog Bear in what she is calling Rescue Roadtrips.

When it feels like life is crumbling all around and you have to start over, sometimes having a four-legged friend can make everything seem easier. This is a lesson that Patty Gosselin learned in recent years when she felt like her life was taking a new direction.

"This is who I am at post 50 and post divorce," Gosselin said. "I never thought that, after the divorce, my life would turn out like this."

She decided that instead of sulking over the changes in her life, she would do what she could to make a positive impact both for herself and others.

After years of working in a corporate environment, Gosselin took a job as the office assistant at the Newington Veterinary Clinic.

"I threw out all of my high heels and suits," she said. "It was a total change."

A town native, she bought a house where she and her beloved Australian shepherd Bear now live, but settling down did not mean slowing down. After rescuing a senior cat named Moo last year, Gosselin felt inspired to do more.

"Had I not taken her, she would have ended up in a no-kill shelter," Gosselin explained.

"From that, the idea came to me to look up no-kill shelters and see what I could do to help."

Gosselin started her own initiative called 4 the Luv of Paws to bring necessary pet supplies to no-kill animal shelters around the state.

"I'm not rich, but I asked myself, what can I do?" she said.

Hoping to help herself as much as she helps animals, she came up with the idea of doing what she calls Rescue Roadtrips.

She would research a no-kill shelter that needed help, drop off donations of needed items, then celebrate by going on a local hike with Bear.

"I hike a lot and I wanted to do day trips with my dog," she said.

At the beginning of the summer, Gosselin began collecting items that could be used at a shelter. Although the effort is not associated with the veterinary clinic, her bosses and co-workers allowed her to set up a bin for her collection efforts.

"I thought it was amazing," receptionist Cherie Searles said. "It gives people a chance to do something with things they may not have been using anyway."

The items that Gosselin continues to collect include food and treats, as well as cleaning supplies that can be donated with lower frequency.

"It's not about the money. You don't have to spend $100 to help. It's the old towels you don't use or the cleaning supplies that you bought but don't like the smell of, or the cans of cat food you bought by mistake," she said.

Gosselin added that the amount donated also does not matter to her as long as she is able to bring something to the shelter.

"I've decided that this is something I'm doing every month," she said. "I don't care if I'm dropping off one can of cat food, I'm going."

Her first Rescue Roadtrip was July 24 to the Simon Foundation in Bloomfield and after that she was hooked.

"When I left the Simon Foundation, I was giddy," she said, a wide smile spread across her face. "It makes you see what else is out there."

Following that donation, she and Bear hiked up to Heublein Tower in Simsbury for the road trip part of the day.

Since then, Gosselin has spent

much of her free time researching no-kill shelters and planning out her next Rescue Roadtrips.

She is looking into facilities that don't offer other means of fund raising, such as grooming, so as to be able to help where she feels there is the greatest need.

"I want to help the no-kill shelters that really need the help," she said. "They don't just need food and collars, they need towels and comforters and cleaning supplies, too."

Because she is not an official nonprofit organization and is "just a good citizen trying to help," Gosselin only collects material donations. Many who go into the Newington Veterinary Clinic and have seen her signs have already made donations.

"People come in and see the sign and they ask me, what group is this? I tell them it's Patty and then they want to donate even more because they know her," Searles said.

"She's such a genuine, sincere person. Even before she started this, she just always wanted to put good things in the world."

Photos courtesy of Patty Gosselin

For her first Rescue Roadtrip, Newington native Patty Gosselin loaded up her car with material donations to benefit the Simon Foundation in Bloomfield. Then she and her dog Bear took a hike to the Heublein Tower in Talcott Mountain State Park in Simsbury.

With her new efforts fully underway, Gosselin is excited about what may come in her future.

"It's an adventure," she said. "I want to make phase two the best rest of my life." **NL**

Material donations for 4 the Luv of Paws mat be dropped off at the Newington Veterinary Clinic, 177 Day St.

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Joining forces

Chamber and EDC combine forces to promote business development

by Mark Jahne
Editor

The town Economic Development Commission and Newington Chamber of Commerce share an interest in bringing new businesses to town and keeping them here. That's why they have decided to work together and share their resources and knowledge.

The two groups will co-sponsor "Business Breakfast 411" at 7:30 a.m. Oct. 26 at Stew Leonard's, 3475 Berlin Turnpike. New, current and prospective business owners are encouraged to attend. This will be an informational gathering featuring a presentation by Andrew Brecher, the town's economic development officer, and other local government officials. The organizers are hoping that the mayor, town manager, police chief, town planner and others will be there.

A full hot breakfast will be served in the supermarket's upstairs dining room. Business owners will be given ample opportunity to ask questions and learn about the resources that are available to them.

The cost is $10 per person and proceeds will be donated to the town food bank. Reservations are required. Payment is requested no later than Oct. 14 and may be sent to the chamber office at 1046 Main St.

"This is something new," Mia Pane of the EDC said. "I don't think a lot of them [business owners] even know we exist."

Topics will include opening a business in town and understanding sign regulations.

"This will give them a place to come with their questions and get them answered," fellow EDC member Jennifer Spano said.

She sees multiple benefits in connecting business people with local government. Both Spano and Pane are relatively new members of the commission. They also spoke of the importance of not only attracting businesses to town, but making sure they stay here.

"The Newington chamber and the EDC should have a relationship. We should be working together," chamber Executive Director Gail Whitney said. "It's a no-brainer that we work together."

The EDC is about to launch an outreach effort in which its members will strive to personally visit as many businesses in town as possible, including mom and pop stores and those operations that are home based.

"We're excited. We're hoping it's going to be successful and an annual thing," Whitney said of the breakfast. "The EDC set a lot of goals and is getting things done." **NL**

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Photos by Allie Rivera

Jill Hinton, a kindergarten teacher at John Paterson School, was named Newington's teacher of the year, in part for her hands-on approach to differentiating education for each of her students.

Teacher of the year

John Paterson kindergarten teacher wins district recognition

by Allie Rivera
Staff Writer

When John Paterson School kindergarten teacher Jill Hinton looks at her classroom of new students, she doesn't just see a group of five-year-olds. She sees individual children whom she thinks of as her own.

"I refer to each of my kids as a puzzle piece," she said. "I have no idea how the pieces will fit together, I have no idea what the picture will look like, but I know we'll get there."

Now in her seventeenth year, she considers language to be important. She refers to all of her students as "my kids" or "my friends," fostering a community environment within the walls of her classroom and beyond.

"I want them to own their learning. I want them to own where they live," Hinton said.

For her efforts both in the classroom and in the halls of John Paterson, Hinton was honored as the town's teacher of the year, a recognition that led her to ponder herself and her career.

"It caused me to do a lot of reflecting that I don't get to do on a daily basis," she said of the process. "There were things that I never would have thought of and I think I learned a lot about myself."

Hinton has spent her entire teaching career at John Paterson, assigned to second grade for two years before moving on to work with kindergartners. It's an age group that she finds incredibly rewarding to teach.

"Everything is new to them," she said.

Hinton added that she is able to greatly see the impact of her work by tracking her students' progress throughout the school year.

"When you see a kid come in and they don't know their letters, they don't know how to write their name, and then when they leave, they can read? It's so rewarding," she said.

She said kindergarten can also be a challenging grade to teach because students enter with a wide range of experience levels.

"Everybody's in a different place. I have some who come in and don't know any letters and some who are already reading and

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- Fought for legislation to strengthen human trafficking laws.
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writing," she said.

"Many of them are coming from an environment where even if there are 20 kids, there are five adults, and a lot of times in here it's just me."

The challenge and also exciting part of her job is learning about each child's ability level and pushing them forward to their greatest potential.

Through differentiating her lesson plans, Hinton works to ensure that those students who come in to knowing how to read and write aren't stalled in their learning as the others catch up.

"It's a lot of repetitive, a lot of patience," she said. "You've got to give hugs and you've got to wipe tears."

Patience is a necessary attribute to teach kindergarten. Her colleagues credit Hinton with having an abundance.

"She just comes in and takes a deep breath every day. Nothing frazzles her," fellow kindergarten teacher Jodi Klimas said. "She's just very calm and very positive."

Klimas said patience and a positive attitude are useful not only for the students, but for fellow teachers, as they are impacted by a variety of changing standards and procedures throughout the year.

"I think it's not only looking at the whole child, you have to look at the whole family, because that's a huge part of it."

–Jill Hinton

"She has a great attitude when there are changes in the district," Klimas said. "She's the one who is taking a deep breath and taking a look at it, and instead of getting negative about it, she says 'how can we do this the best that we can?'"

Along with her direct work with students, Hinton makes it a point to get to know the families as well so as to best help with each child's education.

"You have to work with all these other factors to figure out how to help the whole child," she said. "I think it's not only looking at the whole child, you have to look at the whole family, because that's a huge part of it."

"She has a great rapport with not only everyone in the school, but with families," Klimas said. "She really goes above and beyond what's required of teachers."

In her quest to educate the whole child, Hinton has made it her mission to set attainable, but high, expectations for each student.

"If you expect high, they will rise to it," she said. "It's not a rat race. Sometimes you have to take some things slow, but you will get there."

She said this honor would not have been possible without the teamwork and friendship of fellow kindergarten teachers Klimas and Catherine Flint.

"My two colleagues who I work with, we call each other sisters," Hinton said. "Without them, I wouldn't be as great of a teacher as I am. It is a team effort."

Klimas echoed those sentiments and agreed that the three work together in a way that benefits both themselves and their students.

"We do a lot of learning from each other," Klimas said. "When children enter group, they kind of get all three of us. We're a three-for-one package."

Hinton is grateful for the recognition as teacher of the year and is looking forward to more ways that she can collaborate with her fellow teachers, both at John Paterson and throughout the district, where she is highly involved in curriculum writing, professional development and the teacher evaluation system.

"Despite me being the one to get the honor of teacher of the year, I didn't get it just because of what I do," she said. "It's not about what you do by yourself, it's what you do with others and for others." **NL**

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Working together

Mayors share ideas and seek solutions at monthly meetings

by Mark Jahne
Editor

Talk of large regional initiatives sometimes leaves people feeling unsettled. This is New England, after all, where every city and town is an entity unto itself and local control is highly valued.

But that doesn't mean regional initiatives of more modest means need to be excluded, especially when they can result in more efficient government and saving taxpayers money. That's why six area mayors have been meeting once a month to share thoughts and ideas.

"Back in early spring, Paul Montinieri in Wethersfield reached out to the surrounding towns," said Cromwell Mayor Enzo Faienza.

The proposal was to meet each month to discuss matters of common interest. Faienza signed on, as did mayors Claudia Baio of Rocky Hill and Roy Zartarian of Newington. Luke Bronin of Hartford and Mark Kaczynski of Berlin also chose to participate.

Politics didn't come into the equation. Baio, Bronin and Montinieri are Democrats. Faienza, Kaczynski and Zartarian are Republicans. All share a common interest in better serving their constituents and see a benefit in getting to know one another.

"The idea is to communicate and pass information along. … How can we help each other out?" Faienza said.

"So far, it's gone very well. We're concentrating on things we know we can successfully do together. We're all trying to do what's best for our towns."

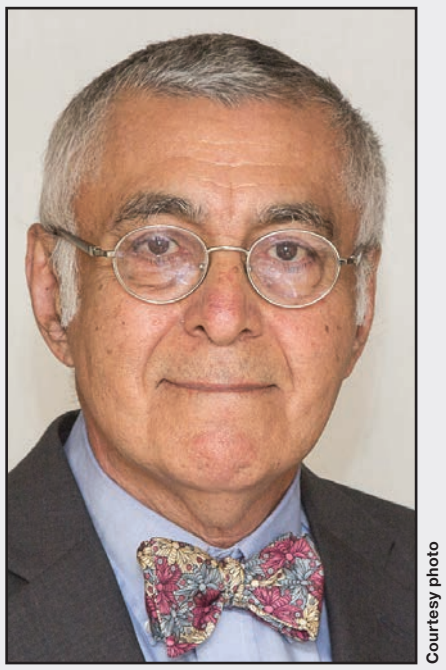
He described a previous initiative in which Cromwell and Portland shared a grant that allowed them to acquire a seal cracking machine for road repair, a camera system to inspect sewers, and a bulldozer.

"We're calling it a regional mayors' discussion and roundtable. We've had fairly lengthy conversations … open dialogues," Montinieri said.

The group has met four times thus far. State legislators often join them and one time each mayor brought along his or her town manager. U.S. Rep. John Larson has also dropped in.

Montinieri said the idea is to look for synergy and savings and ways to help one another.

That's particularly true as they watch the financial challenges of Hartford and listen to what Bronin is trying to do to keep the capital city's financial ship from



Courtesy photo

Mayor Roy Zartarian is part of a new regional initiative among six local mayors to meet on a regular basis and discuss matters of common interest.

hitting the rocks.

"Luke is on a parallel effort with CCM [Connecticut Conference of Municipalities]," Montinieri said. "The mayors in this group feel strongly that we should have Hartford in this dialogue."

The city has long been plagued with budget woes and a ranking among the most impoverished urban centers in the nation.

It also suffers from the fact that so much of its property is either tax exempt or only pays only a modest portion of assessed tax value under the state's PILOT (Payment in Lieu of Taxes) program.

There is the chance the city could face bankruptcy but Montinieri is confident the legislature will not allow that to happen.

He firmly believes that what happens in Hartford directly affects the suburbs.

In the meantime, the suburban towns are seeking ways to cooperate with one another.

He said they also know that what each town does is not occurring in a vacuum.

"We're talking about paving projects," he said.

They're also looking at ways to save money by going in together on purchasing fire apparatus and police cars.

"There's been a real, honest awareness that this hasn't happened in the past. I'm encouraged by the cooperative spirit. It's a very worthwhile initiative," Montinieri said.

"It's always good to talk with other mayors about ways we can work together to our mutual benefit," Zartarian said. "We're facing the same challenges, though not to the same extent as Hartford."

All of them struggle with the dependency upon the property tax to raise needed revenue. They also struggle to cope with declining state financial aid.

He doesn't want to see a regional entity created that would cost each municipality its local autonomy, but that is neither the plan nor the focus of this group.

"It's always good to talk with other mayors about ways we can work together to our mutual benefit."

–Mayor Roy Zartarian

He added that some areas of cooperation already exist.

Examples the mayor cited are police accident reconstruction and major crime squads, fire department mutual aid pacts, and the combined ownership of a cherry picker truck by Newington and Wethersfield.

Baio contends that the increased communication alone makes the monthly meetings worthwhile.

All of the mayors are dealing with tight budgets and looking for "low-hanging fruit" as ways to build a habit of working together.

"We're looking more at areas where we can work collaboratively with each other to streamline services and trim expenses. It's not partisan at all. We have a great group. Party affiliation never comes up," Baio said.

She acknowledged that having Hartford at the table creates a different dynamic but feels it important to make sure Bronin is part of the discussions.

"If the capital city fails, it has a ripple effect" on the suburbs, she said. **NL**

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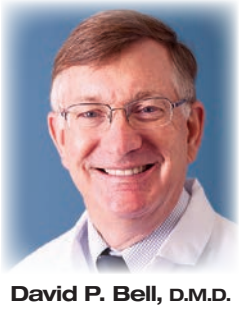
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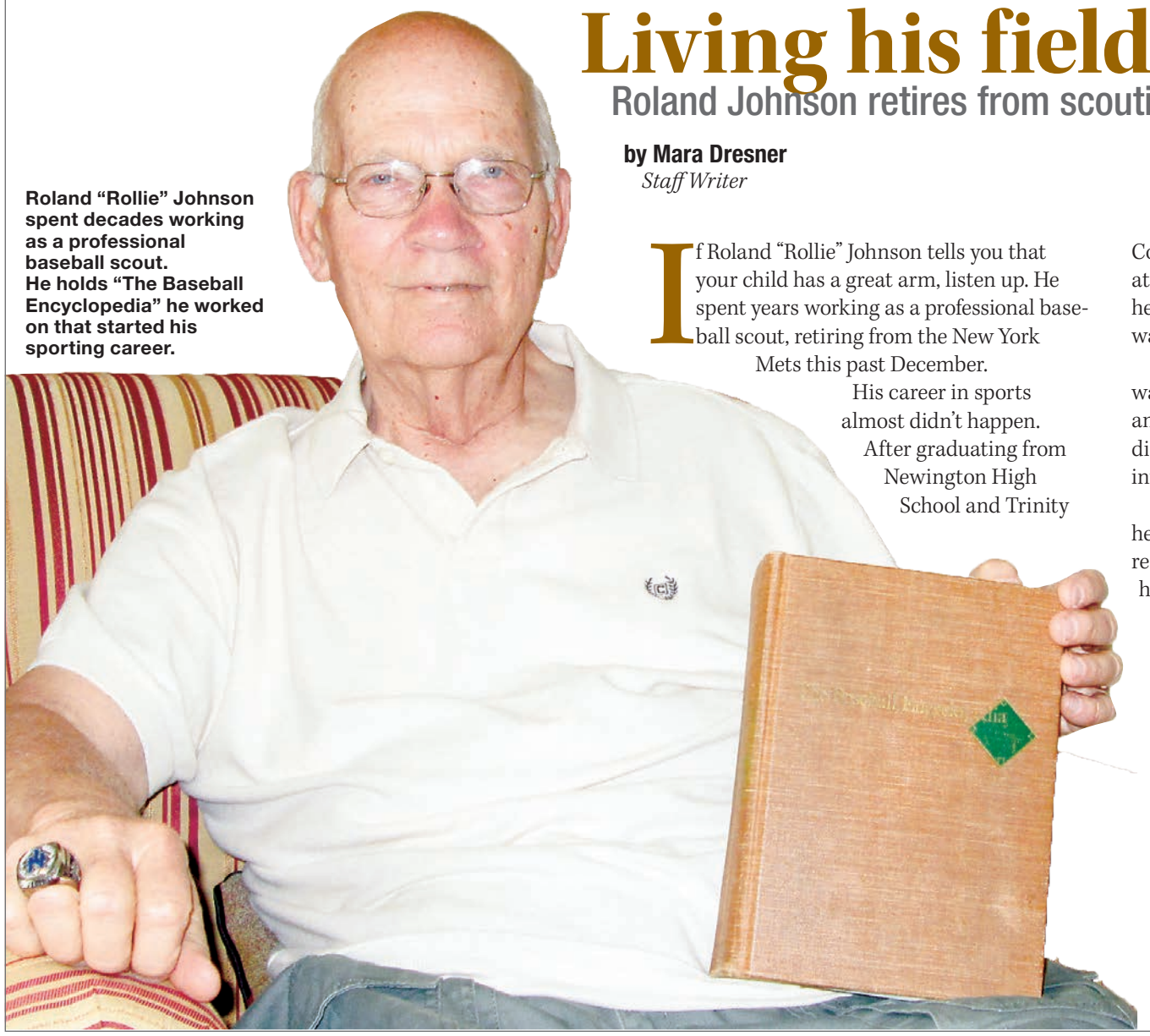
Living his field of dreams

Roland Johnson retires from scouting for the New York Mets

by Mara Dresner
Staff Writer



Roland "Rollie" Johnson spent decades working as a professional baseball scout. He holds "The Baseball Encyclopedia" he worked on that started his sporting career.

If Roland "Rollie" Johnson tells you that your child has a great arm, listen up. He spent years working as a professional baseball scout, retiring from the New York Mets this past December.

His career in sports almost didn't happen. After graduating from Newington High School and Trinity College, where he majored in economics, he was at a crossroads. While he'd played baseball since he was about 5, a professional career as a player wasn't in the cards.

"Like a lot of people, I didn't know what I wanted to do when I got out of college. I became an underwriter for a couple of years. I absolutely didn't like it," Johnson said. "I said, 'I have to get into sports.'"

In 1965, three years after graduating, he heard from someone who was looking for a researcher for a book on baseball. However, before hiring Johnson, the company ran into problems.

"This project was being delayed because of a financial situation. I figured I'd never hear back. Two years later, I heard from them," he said.

The project was "The Baseball Encyclopedia" and Johnson was one of five people working for the company.

"They were looking for people to do research before 1920," he said. "We went back to the old book stacks in the library. There was no Google and computers were as big as this room," he recalled.

He and his wife, Judy, moved to New Jersey and Johnson commuted into New York

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"Without a doubt, it's the best encyclopedia [on baseball]," he said. "It's a terrific book."

When the project was completed, Johnson moved back to Connecticut, returning to the insurance industry.

One of his colleagues from the encyclopedia went on to work at Sports Illustrated and asked him if he'd like to work on a new project that would involve sports books.

He jumped at the chance and eventually opened an office in Newington to do mail order sales of their new products. They also put the idea of scouting into his head.

"I wrote to all the major league teams. The St. Louis Cardinals [were] looking for some people part time," Johnson said. "I was covering Connecticut and Western Massachusetts for $50 a month, no expenses. I did that for four years while I was still I still working on the books."

In 1977, he was recommended for a full-time position.

"I sold out my interest in the books. That was my first full-time [job] as a professional scout. I had eight states to cover, New England, New York and New Jersey, with a few part-time people."

He worked full time for the Cardinals for six years.

"My responsibility was to find people I thought had the possibility to be Major League Baseball players. Then I switched and went to the New York Mets in 1983 and became a cross checker," Johnson said.

"I would go around the country checking the better players that the area scouts [recommended]. The guy in New England didn't know how their guys compare to other guys in California."

He was named director of scouting for the Mets in 1986 and served in that position until 1992.

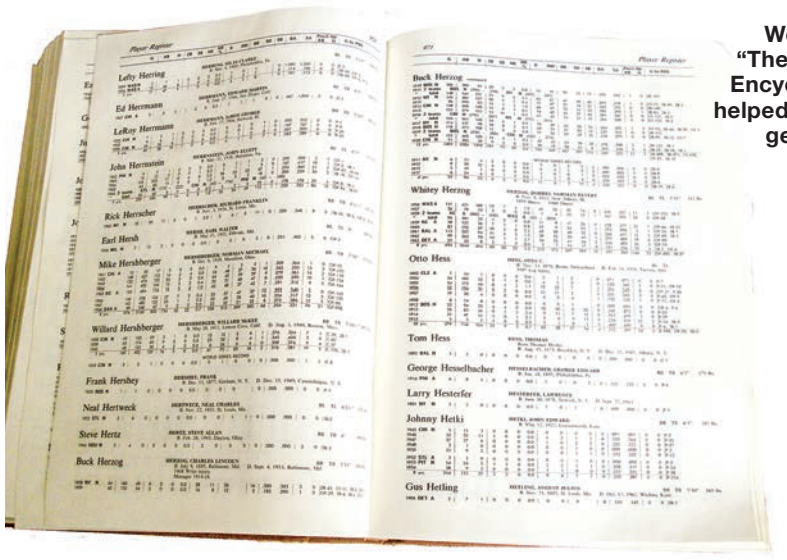
"Then they reorganized and I went back to being a cross checker for a few years. In 1997 they put me in the professional department, the major leagues, minor leagues. Until the end of the past year, I scouted professional baseball," he said.

Johnson was inducted into the Professional Baseball Scouts Hall of Fame in 2009. During his time as a scout, he traveled extensively to most states in the U.S., as well as the Dominican Republic, Costa Rica, Panama and Australia.

He credits his wife for her support through the years.

"She was an important part of the whole thing when I traveled. I wasn't there in the spring when the kids were growing up. It's difficult for the scouts' wives," he said.

"There were certain times of the year when I could be in a different city every day – Chicago one day, Minneapolis the next. Sometimes I'd go look for my rental car and I couldn't remember what color it was," he said. "I enjoyed every minute. It was exciting."



Working on "The Baseball Encyclopedia" helped Johnson get his first scouting job.

"I enjoyed every minute of it. It was exciting."

–Roland Johnson

That doesn't mean it was always glamorous.

"I'd be in little planes, big planes. I remember flying in one of those small planes. The guy who took the ticket is flying the plane. Then he hands out the drinks before we start and then goes and flies the plane," he recalled with a chuckle.

Scouting meant more than just attending games.

"You'd go into a small town and go to a luncheonette. You'd ask about this kid. You hear different things from the people that know him. You put that into the puzzle and then you watch them play," he said.

"The most difficult thing in scouting is their make-up, what they have inside of them. That's the hardest thing to scout. What kind of kid is this? His work ethic, his passion for the game. These are the intangibles you try to figure out the best you can."

Once players are in the major leagues, the standard of competition is different. A player who was a star in high school is now competing against players who are better than he is.

"That's never happened to them before. How do you think they would handle it?" Johnson said. "[They] have to have a little maturity."

In addition to the intangibles, there are certain skills he looked for, including hitting ability, hitting with power, running, throwing and fielding.

"Then we're looking for a body type, a good athletic body," he said.

Sometimes, that takes imagination. A high school player might be tall and lean, but if he puts on 20 or 25 pounds of muscle, his play will improve.

He got so he would almost immediately know which player he was going to see just by how the player handled himself.

"I'd have the name of a player. I'd be watching the kids come off of a bus. Ninety, 95 percent of the time, I could tell you what kid I'd be looking at. I'd think, 'This kids looks like a professional athlete," he said.

Even when a player didn't perform as well as expected, it didn't mean the team would take an immediate pass.

When he was cross checking, "I'd try to base my judgment on the area scout. The guy could have a terrible day. If the area scout really likes him and this guy struck out three times, you might think, 'This guy had a bad day; he's a good player.' You've got to believe in the scouts. You've got to do it as a team."

Some athletes immediately impress.

"I saw Derek Jeter play at Kalamazoo High School at 10 o'clock on a Saturday morning; he was a skinny guy," Johnson said.

"Manny Ramirez, he was from the Bronx in New York and they used aluminum bats. We brought him into Shea Stadium. We wanted to see him swing a wooden bat. He was unbelievable. It was [as though] he'd swung a wood bat all his life.

"The best guy I ever signed as an area scout was Andy Van Slyke from New Hartford, N.Y. He was 6'2", 190 pounds. I went up to see him. I loved the guy. He could run, throw, he had a great swing," Johnson said.

Van Slyke was offered a full-time scholarship to Penn State to play football and a scholarship to Syracuse to play basketball. His father was principal of the school and said he wanted to play baseball.

"I go up to see him and when you saw a really good player, you'd bring other people to see him. One of our top scouts took him out at lunchtime, worked him out. This scout loved the guy."

They called in the scouting director.

"It was the middle of May, 85 degrees, hot and humid. This kid comes out in just a pair of shorts, bare-chested. He was not the same kid I've seen before, there was something different about him. I noticed a couple of red marks on his arms. He was OK," Johnson said.

The scouting director thought he was good, but not exemplary that day. Then he found out what the red marks were.

"He boxed four rounds last night. He wanted to get his mind off the game. The red marks on his arms was from getting hit in the arms," Johnson said.

"We were picking sixth in the country. We took him sixth. He was playing the state championships and we went to see him play and have him sign the contract. His last time up, he hits at the second baseman, trips over first and breaks his ankle."

They flew him to St. Louis to have team doctors check him out.

"They signed him anyway. He ended up being an all-star," Johnson said.

He didn't always have to travel far to find talent, such as John McDonald, a shortstop from Connecticut who played at Providence College. McDonald played 15 years in the major leagues.

"He had a great makeup. He learned how to play shortstop and ended up being a tremendous utility player. His makeup was off the charts," Johnson said.

"He wanted to work on things he didn't do well. He ended up being a better player than I thought. The make-up determines it, the passion."

He recruited Newington's own Pete Hepple for the Cardinals 37 years ago and his son, Mike, for the Mets in 2014.

"There are a lot of great qualities about Rollie. One of those things was his wealth of experience. It was so nice on my staff to have someone with the breadth and wealth of knowledge he had," Jim D'Aloia Sr. said.

He is director of professional scouting for the Mets.

"He's a really hard worker. He loves baseball, he loves getting out to the games. He had a great work ethic. He was just a joy to have on the staff. He was an excellent scout."

Johnson has seen changes in baseball, dating from the days when scouts might wear a sport coat and hat to see a player, such as using a radar gun.

"[Scouting] is so analytical, it's so statistical now. We analyze every single thing," Johnson said.

"Years ago we scouted right here with our eyes. While statistics are very important, it's just another tool to look at. I think the number-one thing is the scout's eyes. You see little things that statistics will not tell you, what's inside this guy, his overall baseball instincts."

Another major change is the money.

Johnson said a number-six pick, such as Van Slyke, would sign for $50,000 back then. Today that pick might get $5 million.

"Once the player agents got involved, that's when prices went up. Joe DiMaggio made $100,000; now he'd make $10 million. The money with television is phenomenal now," he said.

"You can take a kid out of Newington High School, and if he goes in the first round, he'll make at least $2 million – and he's never stepped on a professional field in his life," he added. "Some of the guys are reading the Wall Street Journal in the clubhouse now, as opposed to reading Sports Illustrated years ago."

The Boston Red Sox were his favorite team growing up but Johnson has long since become a Mets fan.

"I watch every game. I keep track of everything that's going on. They treated me as professionally as they could, every step of the way," he said.

"There was not a day I didn't want to go to work. I feel so fortunate to do a job I loved to do. I'll always think of scouting. I'll do it when I'm 100 years old if I live that long. It's in my blood." **NL**

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Focus on fitness

Expert advice for women of all ages

by Lynn Woike
LIFE Staff

Exercise is an important part of any person's regular routine.

Swimming, biking, hiking, yoga: everyone has a personal preference of how they liketo stay in shape.

When planning an exercise regimen, in addition to choosing something that will keep one motivated, it's important to consider the physiological needs of the body as it ages.

"For women in their 20s, a lifestyle that includes regular exercise and daily activity is vital," said Jennifer Braun, a certified physical therapist at Anytime Fitness in West Hartford.

"Exercise regimens should include a combination of strength, cardiovascular and metabolic accelerated resistance training for a well-rounded program. Strength is especially important for maintaining strong and healthy bones and setting the body up for prevention of osteoporosis as women age.

"Women have a higher risk of developing osteoporosis – the breakdown of bone to become fragile due to loss of bone tissue. When strength training is started in their 20s and maintained, women are less likely to develop osteoporosis early on and can maintain a more active lifestyle," Braun said.

As years pass and life gets more complicated, it can be difficult to stay on track. Exercise may become less of a priority, but women are encouraged to fight that trend.

"Most fitness trainers say that a comprehensive wellness program includes cardio two to three days per week, strength training a minimum of two days per week and stretching seven days per week. But 30-somethings are busy with careers, families, and homes, so their time is precious, to say the least," said Maggie Durbas, who has a personal training background and owns Journey of Yoga LLC in Simsbury.

She recommends yoga for busy women in

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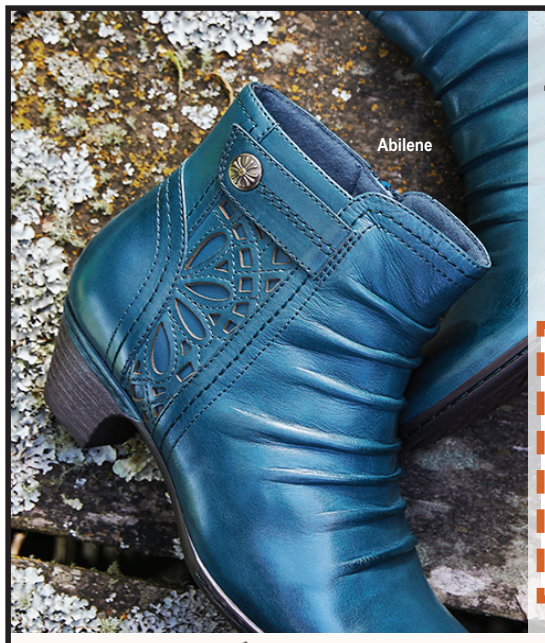

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Just *for Women*

their 30s.

"If time is an issue, practicing yoga for an hour two to three times a week can do triple duty and help with strengthening, stretching and even cardio, never mind the myriad of other health benefits," she said.

"Yoga is far more than simply stretching. Depending on the type of class, it can definitely be considered strength training. For example, power and vinyasa both can be strengthening, if the poses are challenging and held for at least 30 seconds. If the vinyasa class is flowing the entire time, like Ashtanga – from which vinyasa was derived – it can also be a cardiovascular workout."

Durbas tells the story of a woman who, because of an injury, used only yoga to train for "her umpteenth triathlon."

"Because of the vinyasa flowing movement, she got the cardio she needed for running and biking, chair and warrior poses prepared her quads for biking and the rhythmic breathing prepared her for swimming. She completed the triathlon close to the same time she had done the prior year," Durbas said.

Your 40s are a time you should be focused on becoming your healthiest, said Kevin Kosis, a certified exercise physiologist with a bachelor's degree in exercise science at Designed Training in Glastonbury.

"Your 40s are when your body starts to go through changes. For women especially, premenopausal levels start to change, calcium levels and bone density start to drop off. Osteoporosis rates nearly double after 40, breast cancer rates exponentially rise after 40, and cardiovascular risk factors elevate after 45. But there's an easy fix for that: exercise," he said.

He recommends starting with squats three times a week, using light weights and doing three sets of 15 repetitions each. "Slowly start increasing weight when you're comfortable and decrease to 10 repetitions," Kosis said.

Studies regarding preventative care in breast cancer show physically active people are less likely to receive a diagnosis, and High Intensity Interval Training has proven to be beneficial.

Decreasing stress levels will also do wonders, and again exercise helps with that, he said, adding that a healthy diet is also important to maintaining a healthy lifestyle.

As women age into and beyond menopausal years, exercise continues to be a key to staying healthy as well as warding off other illnesses and staying mentally sharp.

According to Peter Asadourian of Future Fitness Sport Specific Training, no matter what age you are, "the hardest thing to do is to start a training program."

Different anxieties may come into play, but it's important to approach the task at hand with the right mindset. Those in older age groups should not fall victim to the belief that it is too late for them to start a new, healthy routine.

"When starting that training program, you need to take some gradual steps," he said. "Set goals for yourself, where you want to be in a few months, etc. Find out what you can do and know your limits. If you are able to do movements with great form and you are breathing comfortably and there is no pain, then you can do it. Just because you are 50 or 60-plus years old does not mean you can't do what a 20-year-old is doing."

It's important when joining a gym to be sure a trainer is providing appropriate guidance and movements are being modified to one's personal abilities, Asadourian said.

"Taking part in a fitness program especially as we get into our 50s and 60s is very beneficial," he said. "We want our bones and muscles to stay strong to avoid injury and other health issues. Exercise is the answer to a lot of everyday health issues."

Its easy to start; your first move is to get up off the chair." **NL**

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Just *for Women*

What I tell my friends

Advice from women, for women

by Allie Rivera
Staff Writer

For many women, relying on the advice of friends or family members can be a key factor in decision making. Those in the medical world are similarly used to providing advice to their friends, family and neighbors about how to stay healthy.

"I would stress preemptive measures," said Dr. Sai Varanasi, a fellow of the American College of Surgeons at Bristol Hospital. "It's good to be proactive."

Varanasi, whose areas of special interest include high-risk groups of breast diseases as well as genetic testing for breast disease, stressed the importance of knowing one's body.

"I tell people to get used to your breasts," she said. "Particularly for young women who have very lumpy breasts, it's good to know how they feel so that if there's something different, you can bring it to the attention of your physician or gynecologist."

In addition to knowing about yourself, Varanasi said it is important to know about your family's past.

"I would tell friends and neighbors more and more now to be aware of their family histories," she said. "We can help them with a genetic background a little bit more than we could a few years ago. The more they can give us, the better."

For those who do have a history of breast cancer in their family, starting mammograms early is key. Dr. Varanasi suggested beginning the testing 10 years before the age that a family member had been diagnosed, for example if a family member was diagnosed at 40, mammograms should start at age 30.

Varanasi recognized that many insurance plans do not cover the testing until age 45, but she said that she suggests to friends that they start earlier, if possible.

"If it's my friend, I will still tell her, as long as insurance is paying, go for the mammogram starting at 40," she said. "It's better if we can detect it sooner. The smaller the tumor, the less invasive the surgery."

To help prevent these diseases, Varanasi said that she tells her friends to reduce habits that could increase risk.

"Smoking, drinking, these are the factors that increase the risk of breast cancer," she said. "Alcohol, even a drink a day, is supposed to be pushing the envelope for women. I tell my friends to make it a weekend thing."

Additionally, Varanasi said that research has shown a direct link between obesity and breast cancer. To help manage risk, she recommended moderate exercise for 30 minutes per day, five days per week.

In general, Varanasi said that one thing she always stresses to her friends and family is the importance of owning their health.

"I tell my friends that sometimes the patients have to be their own advocates," she said. "The best way is to be current in what's going on out there. ... Sometimes doctors forget to order an ultrasound when a patient has dense breasts," she said. "Out of 50 states, there are 22 where insurance pays for ultrasounds for dense breasts. This is something I would tell my friends and neighbors to be cognizant of." **NL**

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Just *for Women*

Why I wear PINK

Breast cancer color is personal for many

Compiled by Mara Dresner & Alicia Smith

It's hard to miss the pink during Breast Cancer Awareness month in October. Many people go pink just to show support or raise awareness for a good cause. But for others, wearing pink has a much more personal meaning. We spoke to a number of readers to find out why they wear pink.

Jan Kritzman

"I was diagnosed with breast cancer in November 2012, almost four years ago. I was very fortunate, it was found early and I had minor surgery, a lumpectomy, but did choose to have chemotherapy and radiation as an insurance policy. I had done quite a bit of research on breast cancer and I knew it wasn't a matter of if, but when. My mother had breast cancer and my aunt had it twice. They got breast cancer when they were in their 60s. I was at the time 65, so it was not a surprise at all that I was diagnosed. My tumor was very tiny; it wasn't palpable. Here's the most important part: my breast cancer did not show up on the mammogram. I'd had 25 years of mammograms where the radiologist told me, your mammogram was "normal," there were "no suspicious findings," have a nice day, make an appointment for next year.

In 2010, two years before my cancer was found, I was told, "You have dense breast tissue." I said, "What's that?" It's a benign condition that makes it very difficult to see early cancer. I had extremely dense breast tissue. At that point I'd had 23 mammograms. It became a law in 2010 in Connecticut that they must tell you if you have dense breast tissue. Connecticut was the first state with such a law. They must tell you if you have dense breast tissue and that a mammogram is not enough, you must get an ultrasound, which gives you a different contrast.

In November 2012, I had a mammogram that was normal. I knew I had to get an ultrasound, and that was when it was discovered – on the ultrasound, not on the mammogram. As I went through treatment, I felt very fortunate that we had a law in Connecticut where they had to tell me this. Because of this law, my cancer was caught very, very early. I did some research and came across a foundation called areyoudense.org. It was founded by Nancy M. Cappello, PhD. Her breast cancer was diagnosed very late stage, a 3C, in 2004. She had extremely dense breast tissue. In 2004, she could feel a lump but it didn't show up on a mammogram. She decided no other woman in the world should be diagnosed so late. So she quit her job and founded areyoudense.org. In 2016, we have 28 states in the United States where a woman must be told about her dense breasts. I called her up and I thanked her for saving my life, and asked her if there was anything she would want me to do to help in her mission. I travel with her occasionally when I can; I go on speaking tours. I am the beneficiary of her efforts."

Gina Uricchio

"Before I was diagnosed with breast cancer, pink was truly just a pretty color that most little girls wear a lot of. A lover of fashion, I work pink on Valentine's Day and paired pink oxfords with jeans as my "go to" outfit.

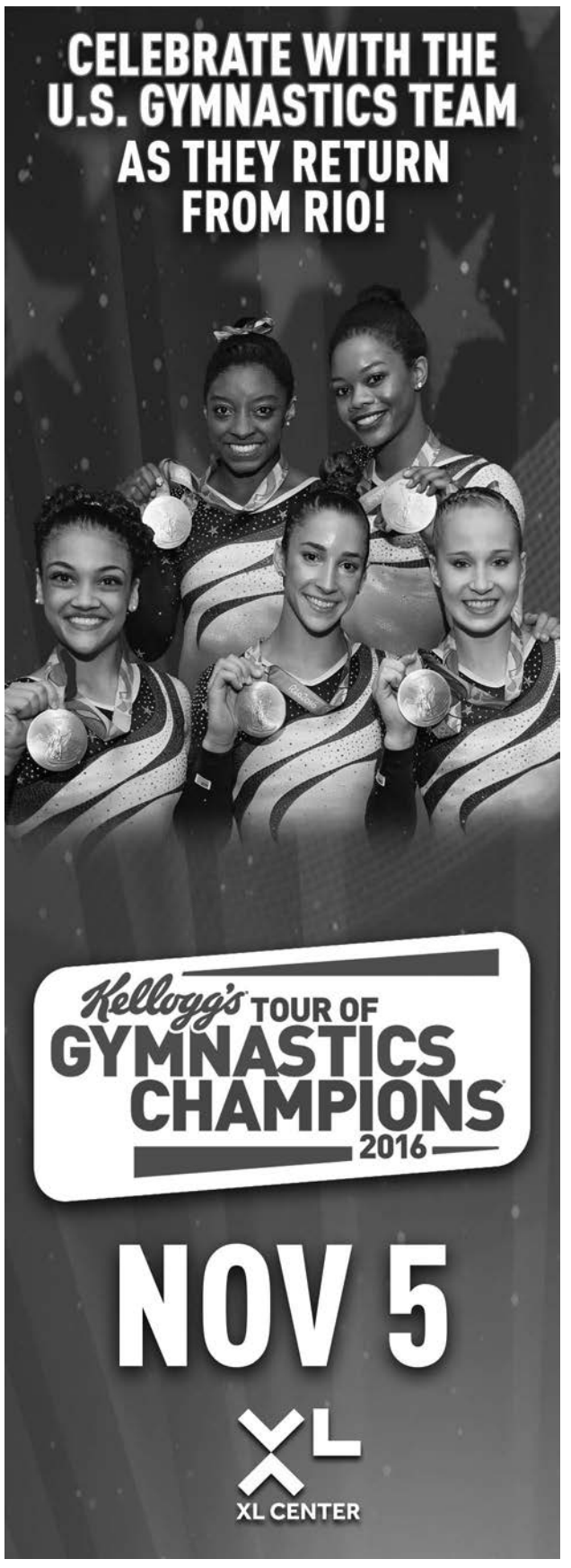
As a survivor now, I see the color from such a different perspective. Funny how life changes the way you look at things in an instant.

I wear pink in October for so many reasons. The color pink applies to so many different types of women I know. And like the fashion color, I apply these to the women in my life and our world. I wear carnation pink for the survivors before me, those who fought hard and strong and didn't have the medicine available to us like the lucky ones today. For my grandmothers who loved the color and would have proudly wore this to support their granddaughter. I wear bold magenta pink for my fellow survivors, my peers. To the moms being diagnosed daily, and for some of the most beautiful, kindest women who have come into my life because of cancer.

I wear blush pink for my father, who wore a pink bracelet every day, and my husband, who fielded every doctor's call and pathology report, and fearlessly lead our family through it all.

I wear bubblegum pink for my son and daughter. For my son, who wore pink Nikes during my surgeries. For my daughter, who, along with her classmates, made meals for our family. For my nieces and the sweet young women and teens who are supporting us all with bracelets and pink stripes on their hair. I wear champagne pink for the caregivers. My sister, who created a CaringBridge for me. For my mom, who moved in my house to take care of my family, and to all the people who stand valiantly behind their person.

Lastly, I wear rose pink for Pink Yoga, created by my "sister survivor" Kristina Giliberto (of Glastonbury), yoga classes for survivors and those in treatment, a community that supports your diagnosis and the "afterlife" with self-care. Together now, we teach yoga and self-care workshops to women navigating life after diagnosis." **NL**



What nutrition professionals eat

Pie and candy have place on the menu

by Mara Dresner
Staff Writer

Every day there seems to be a new diet book or plan that everyone is talking about. Figuring out what's best to eat can be a challenge. So LIFE went to the source to ask some health professionals what they eat on a typical day. While everyone's nutritional needs are different, you might find inspiration with these real-world sample menus.

Nutrition Katryna – courtesy photo

Katryna Minski, a Registered Dietitian/Certified Diabetes Educator at Hartford Hospital in Glastonbury, said her biggest tip is to eat throughout the day. "Don't skip meals," she advised. "Eat regularly every three to four hours. Set reminders in your phone so you don't forget."

She also drinks water infused with cucumber and mint throughout the day, usually about 48 ounces.

Breakfast: Prosciutto-wrapped mini frittata muffin made with prosciutto, lots of diced veggies (her favorites include kale, tomato and mushrooms) and a sprinkle of cheese. "These egg cups can be made ahead and are a great grab-and-go breakfast for busy weekday mornings. I recommend using the silicone muffin sheets," she said. She also has 12 ounces of Colombian coffee with a splash of whole milk.

Snack: Emerald Nuts 100-calorie pack vanilla roasted almonds and half cup of blackberries.

Lunch: Arnold whole-wheat Sandwich Thins roll, two slices deli-sliced Boar's Head Cracked Pepper Mill smoked turkey breast, one slice of sharp provolone cheese, a handful of arugula, Hellmann's light mayo, lightly spread. Served with Sabra single serving cup hummus (original flavor) and sliced veggies (baby carrots, sugar snap peas, mini bell peppers, cherry tomatoes) and a 12-ounce can of Polar pomegranate-flavored seltzer.

Snack: Small container of Dannon Oikos Triple Zero Salted Caramel Greek Yogurt.

Dinner: Four ounces of baked chicken parmesan with zucchini noodles. She breads the chicken with almond meal and spices. "I love my spiralizer. It makes eating veggies fun." she said. 16 ounces of water.

Favorite treat: One package of Dole Dippers dark chocolate covered frozen banana slices (100 calories)

Nutritionist York: Photo by UConn-Health/Janine Gelineau

Linda York, a Registered Dietician/Certified Diabetes Educator with the UConn Health outpatient department, noted that exercise is crucial to maintaining a healthy weight. "Exercise is medicine," she said, advocating for a half hour of aerobic exercise each day. "If you do anything extra, that's great, but at least half an hour. If you think of it as medicine, it becomes a habit. You will maintain your weight so you can eat something you want." That includes sweets and other treats. York said she is careful not to keep trigger foods in the house. "I tend not to keep anything in the house that I really like. I tend to go out and get it," she said of her favorite treats. She also drinks a lot of water.

Breakfast: Two slices raisin toast, one teaspoon of Smart Balance margarine. A cup of coffee with skim milk, no sugar. Or a cup of old-fashioned oatmeal with one teaspoon of brown sugar and one-half cup of skim milk and frozen berries or a sliced banana, with coffee. On weekends, she enjoys omelets with two large eggs, vegetables, hot sauce and Cabot light cheese with two slices toast with Smart Balance margarine.

Lunch: A "big" salad with two to three cups of vegetables, as well as one-half to one cup of fruit, and protein, such as chicken or tuna. No dressing. She also enjoys "some kind of starch," for example, croutons or a small bag of Cape Cod reduced-fat chips.

Snack: If she wants something sweet, she'll have a Quaker Oat 90-calorie granola bar with coffee. She tries to stay under 150 calories for the snack.

Dinner: York's biggest meal. Most days she'll enjoy four ounces of wine with dinner, which is often a pasta dish with tomato sauce without any meat. She'll do a quick stir fry with eggplant to add to the sauce, which she'll season with fresh basil, garlic powder and Italian seasoning, topped with fresh Parmesan. She admits to liking white pasta and usually chooses linguini. On other days, she'll make a lemon chicken, cooked in a little oil, which she'll have along with a carb, such as pasta, a potato or sweet potato, along with half a plate of cooked vegetables, such as broccoli or asparagus, which might be frozen or fresh. She also enjoys poached salmon.

Snack: Around 9 p.m., she'll have a Chobani Greek yogurt, such as black cherry or coconut. She might also have another bag of Cape Cod chips. Once in a while, she'll enjoy a Fudgsicle or small ice cream sandwich. "If I'm still hungry I have a cup of tea," she said.

Favorite treat: Pie, such as blueberry pie. "But I wouldn't have the whole thing in the house; I love it so much," she said. She also enjoys French cheeses. "You just have to have control and make sure you don't have a lot of that stuff in the house."

Nutritionist Renee – courtesy photo

Renée J. Bordeaux, a registered dietitian (RD), Certified dietitian-nutritionist (CD-N) and certified personal trainer (CPT), is owner and president of Bordeaux Nutrition in Newington (bordeauxnutrition.com). She is a fan of "Paleo Diet" as outlined by Dr. Loren Cordain, Ph.D. "I have added my own twist, coining the phrase Paleoesque when working with clients who are transitioning stepwise from a typical high-carb American diet to a healthier, paleo-centric lifestyle. 'Paleo' refers to the Paleolithic era approximately 10,000 years ago when humans were still hunter-gatherers, before the age of agriculture and increased grains in our diet. Once humans began to increase grains in our diet, we began to see increased digestive diseases and inflammation which is the very basis of disease," she explained. "My biggest tip for women's nutrition is to go Paleo. A Paleo diet focuses on nutrient-dense, lower-carb foods that are anti-inflammatory. Women are at higher risk for developing inflammatory/autoimmune conditions. Following a Paleo lifestyle will decrease these risks."

Breakfast: Her "Caveman Cereal:" one-half cup of fruit such as applesauce or berries or one medium banana with one-quarter to one-third cup nuts or seeds (any nuts except for peanuts, which she noted are "legumes that are inflammatory and not nuts") for protein and an omega fat source. On other days, she will have five to six ounces of leftover grass-fed beef, chicken or pork with one to two cups of leftover vegetables, such as spaghetti squash or acorn squash. If she's having a lower-carb veggie, such as spinach, she'll add about a half-cup of fruit. She also drinks coffee with almond milk.

Snack: Two tablespoons of nuts/

Just *for Women*

seeds or one-half cup fruit with one tablespoon of nuts/seeds or half an avocado with grape tomatoes. She drinks water or herbal tea.

Lunch: Five to six ounces of leftover grass-fed beef, pork, chicken, fish, tuna fish or seafood with approximately two cups of non-starchy vegetables (spinach, broccoli, cauliflower or greens) with approximately one-half cup starchy veg such as winter squash, beets, carrots or Brussel sprouts. Vegetables are drizzled with one to two tablespoons of olive, coconut or sesame seed oil for flavor.

Snack: Two tablespoon nuts/seeds or one-half cup fruit. Occasionally, she will have one square of gluten-free, dairy-free 80 percent cocoa chocolate with one tablespoon almonds. Also, water, decaf coffee with almond milk or herbal tea.

Dinner: Very similar to lunch with one glass of wine.

Favorite treat: One-half cup of gluten-free, dairy-free coconut or almond based "ice cream" with nuts or two gluten-free, dairy-free cookies, from Pamela's Products or Aleia's. Another favorite treat is gluten-free, dairy-free dark chocolate "bark thins."

Nutrition Natalie: courtesy photo

Natalie Kebalo, MS, RDN (Registered Dietitian-Nutritionist) at Hartford HealthCare, Jefferson House in Newington, advises, "Get back to the basics as much as you can. Cooking at home with fresh ingredients that are not processed will eliminate the extra calories, fat, sugar and additives, such as artificial colors or flavors, that people are much more conscious of today than ever before." She usually drinks at least eight cups of water per day, mostly between meals.

Breakfast: Brewed coffee with 2 percent milk, one cup of water, two boiled eggs, wheat toast (Freihofer's 100 percent Whole Wheat Bread), two kiwi fruits.

Lunch: Mixed salad greens with leftover grilled steak, tomatoes, half of an avocado and one tablespoon of Italian dressing. One cup of water.

Snack: Whole milk Greek Yogurt from Stop & Shop with a teaspoon of honey.

Dinner: "Spaghetti" (noodles made from yellow squash using a Veggetti spiralizer) sautéed with olive oil and diced garlic, with homemade tomato sauce and meatballs (made with half turkey and half beef), a tablespoon of grated Parmigiano Reggiano cheese from Stew Leonard's, one cup of water. "I love fresh fruits and vegetables that are in season, like the yellow squash, peaches, and tomatoes," she said. "They are much more tasteful and usually cheaper in the supermarket or farmers market."

Dessert/Snack: Soft-serve vanilla/chocolate ice cream from the local dairy bar. She gets a kid-sized "since they love to give extra" and a fresh peach. NL

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courtesy photos

Artist Mary Ruth Shields is working on a series inspired by fellow artist Jack Farkas.

This piece by artist Mary Ruth Shields is made of cotton fabric, cotton batting, cotton and rayon thread. She used free motion machine embroidery, appliqué, free motion quilting and hand sewing to create the piece called "Jack 1."

Fabric is her focus

Mary Ruth Shields believes that art is accessible to all

by Mara Dresner
Staff Writer

Artist Mary Ruth Shields

While clothes are utilitarian for some people, artist Mary Ruth Shields sees wardrobe on a different level.

"When I was in graduate school for my second go-round at Goddard College in Vermont, one of the things I focused on was the expression of self through what people wear. I'm very intrigued by even what people wear in the everyday world that says something about them," she said.

"Something as trivial as what is clean in their closet in the morning or what they picked up off the floor. Are you going to a funeral, or are you a Goth? What is it you're trying to do? You're communicating something, whether you like it or not.

"What are people saying with what they wear? Seventy, 80 percent of people don't even think of it that way. They think two things go together, or I'm fitting in or I'm not. It's usually an unintentional thing. Artists take it to the whole new level," Shields said.

She earned an MFA degree from Goddard with studies in fashion design, apparel industry business methods, consumer self-image and collaboration. She also has a BFA in drawing and crafts from Longwood University in Farmville, Va., where she did her honors thesis on felting, and earned an MST in teaching textiles from the Rochester Institute of Technology School for American Craftsman in New York.

She's always curious when someone dresses outside the norm.

"That's what intrigues me with apparel. What are they trying to say? What are their intentions? How do they influence other people?" she said.

"For instance, I went 18 months at least of wearing only black and white while I was in graduate school the second go-round. That taught me to be much more intentional about what I wear."

Shields, who also is manager at the Wesleyan Potters Gallery/Shop in Middletown, said her own wardrobe will change depending on the circumstances.

"When I go to work, I'm a little more bizarre than what I would wear for a funeral, for instance. When I'm going to work there, I try to be inspiring to people there and the people who come into the gallery, and have fun with it," she said.

"In other situations, I'm like anybody else. I try to fit in and not draw attention to myself."

Her interest in fabrics dates back to childhood.

"I started doing sewing and crafts when I was about 12. Sewing and needlework has always been in my family. The first project I ever did was a smiley face. I embroidered it in neon green and orange. That dates me," she said with a chuckle.

"I'd do anything I could get my hands on. Back then it was called macramé, now it's knotting. [I

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would do] sewing and drawing. When I went to undergraduate school, my portfolio was all drawing and knotting. In undergraduate school I majored in drawing. I made up my own minor in crafts," Shields said.

"I did weaving and felting and basketry and sculpture, jewelry making, a lot of ceramics. I have just always been into crafts, papermaking, photography."

That interest in materials comes through in her current work.

"The art that I do now, it may seem like it's different. It seems like it's kind of scattered, but if you look more closely, it's all a collage. I happen to pick different surfaces to do it on.

"Because of my rural upbringing in Virginia, I'm really big into nature and environmental stewardship and a lot of my work has themes of nature in it. I'm really interested in repurposing materials. If you look at the apparel in there, it's all done with repurposed materials," she said.

She is fond of using common household items, such as gift wrap.

"Wrapping paper as a whole is not recyclable. It's finished with a waxy finish," she said.

She also uses the strapping that goes on big boxes, which is not recyclable. She used both items when designing an outfit for this year's annual Trashion Fashion show in Hartford.

"This year's dress was almost all wrapping paper and tissue paper and straps from cardboard boxes. This year's Trashion Fashion dress became a punk thing," Shields said.

"It was black-and-white striped wrapping paper. That made it into a punk dress, influenced by the wrapping paper. Last year's became what it was because I was just looking for paper and ended up with topographic maps."

She gets many of her materials from EcoWorks, a creative reuse center in New Haven.

"All the materials they have for sale are donated, what a lot of people would think is junk. The other day I found some paper-making supplies, fabric swatches, old jewelry, discarded paint, and rolls and rolls of plastic, some you can't tell what it is," she said.

"It's a wonderful store. All the stuff they sell has been removed from the waste chain. It's all staffed by volunteers. It's a really awesome place."

She's currently working on collages inspired by a former boss of hers, artist Jack Farkas.

"I'm inspired by some pastels he's been doing in the last decade or so. His pieces are flat and have various different motifs and colors on them. I translate them into three dimensions with patterns and fabrics," she said.

"I use some of the shapes that are in his work. Sometimes I edit so there are fewer shapes; sometimes I add shapes."

Farkas, who served as campus director and director of education for Gibbs College for several years, hired Shields to work in its Farmington location in the 2000s.

"She's an outstanding person as an artist, as an instructor. When I built the team I had in Farmington, I hired the best instructors I could find. We took it from four students to 450 students because of the work the faculty was doing with the students; the care, the dedication and the art they do. They are all artists in their own right," Farkas said.

"Mary Ruth is fantastic in textiles. Her fashion designs, what she does with color in fashion is just amazing. The craftsmanship is totally outstanding," he added.

"She's a great person. She'll take the time and work with you. She'll go out of her way to help you with what you're doing. She really pulls the best out of people.

"I've seen her do that with all the students she had. We had students that people said were mediocre. She turned them into fantastic students, working with them and developing themselves and setting goals. I can't talk highly enough of her."

Shields puts her varied background to good use at Wesleyan Potters.

"It's pretty straightforward. I manage the inventory, I do the visual merchandising, I manage a couple of employees. I work with artists in the gallery, getting a show going. I'm also in charge of the pottery social media, such as Twitter, Facebook, a blog and videos," she said.

"She loves talking about art, which is terrific. She came to us with more of an emphasis on fibers. My background and love is pottery, so I talk to her about pottery and she talks to me about fibers. She's brought in some pieces of her work. It's really fun," Liz Blodgett said.

She is the office manager at Wesleyan Potters and first learned of Trashion Fashion from Shields.

"Her work's really spunky. I think she's a real advocate for

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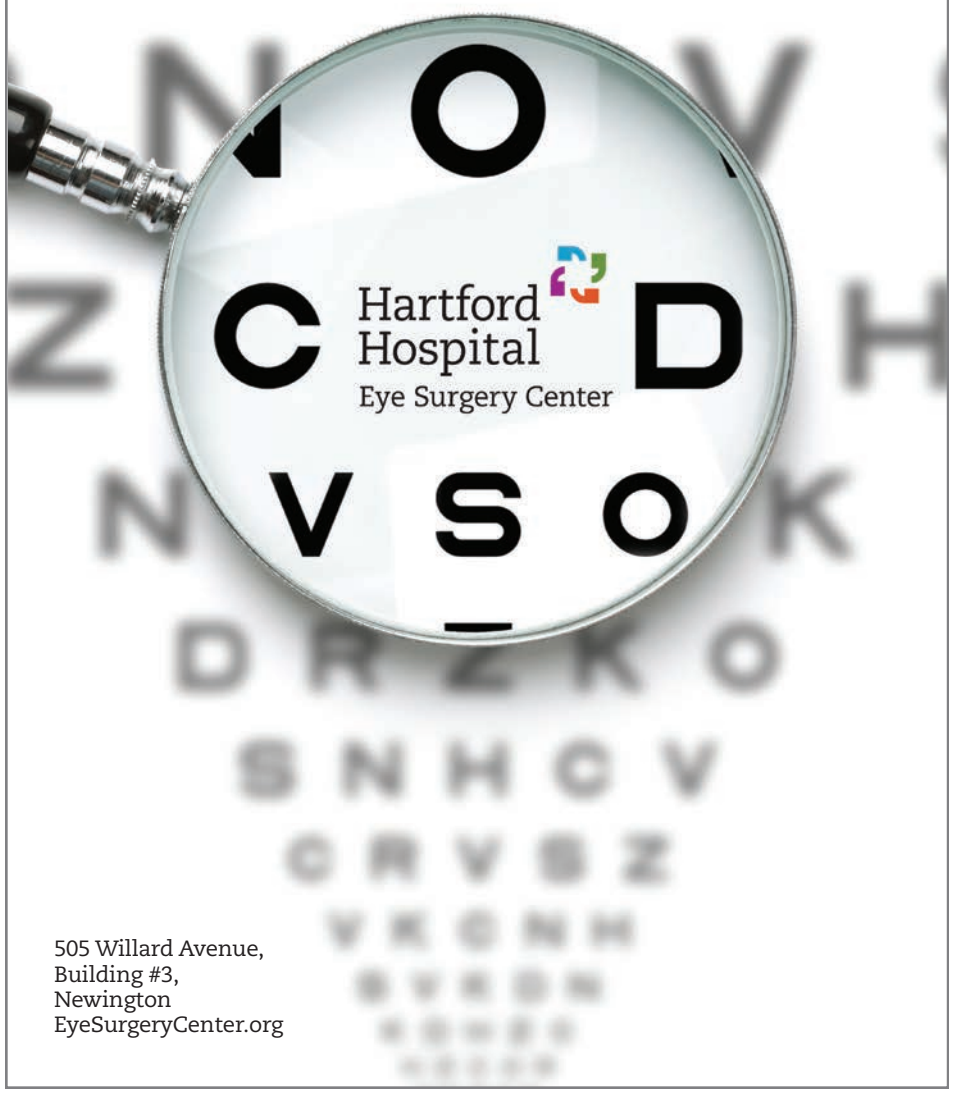

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people working out of the well as in traditional forms. She's really immersed in her craft from the marketing standpoint, to the making standpoint, to the intellectual standpoint to the joy."

Blodgett remembers being struck by Shields' outfit the first time they met.

"She really thinks about not just the cache of the designer, but pulling together the whole look. It really aligns with her love of materials, her love of pattern. She lives it," Blodgett said.

Shields often buys her clothing at Goodwill.

"I really feel guilty if I buy something new. I know the background of how it was manufactured and I don't feel comfortable consuming that type of apparel for ready-to-wear these days," she said.

"The working conditions are horrible. The pay people get overseas is horrible. That's why I wear Goodwill or will consume something I'll wear for years. I don't buy things that go in and out of style. I am very careful about what I consume apparel-wise."

She has her own company that manufactures products for designers.

"We do it in a very environmentally conscious way. The way I treat my independent contractors is very respectable. Manufacturing in the United States is very important. It's very important to control the situation so we don't end up with huge amounts of pollution," she said.

"We treat the employees fairly. What I do is use independent contractors who have difficulty finding gainful employment," she said of her company, White Horse Style.

"I work with people at Chrysalis Center [in Hartford]. They're working on products that are from individual companies or designers and they do piecework for me for which they are paid a fair wage, which is above minimum wage."

The items they make range from pants to meditation cushions.

"I'm doing pretty much anything anybody brings me. I'm a contractor, just like a general contractor who builds your house. I just do that with sewing," she said. "I work 80 hour weeks. I work from 7 in the morning until 11 or 12 at night every day."

Her work has been inspired by a variety of artists including Robert Rauschenberg, Miriam Schapiro, Pablo Picasso and the Baroness Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven.

"I'll either be influenced by the materials or the subject matter, or sometimes it's both. I come up with the idea and something guides it along the way. I'm always interested in the decision as an artist that tells you you're done. You can keep throwing things at compositions. What about it tells me I'm finished? I think it's just a feeling of being at peace with a work of art," Shields said.

"I can just let go and send it on its way. It can exist on its own in the world without your having to say anything. It's a complete piece of communication between you the artist and the person who's looking at it. Whatever it is you're trying to say and there's nothing more to say."

She enjoys the layering process of collage.

"I like the idea of layering and combining. All the images have something that they mean by themselves, even something as basic as a color. When you start putting things together, you can manipulate the meaning and say something more complicated. You can create movement," she said.

"It's all the different possibilities you can get with the collage process. That's what exciting to me about it. You can layer things, combine things, height, texture and depth, or everything can be flat. It gives you permission to combine things that wouldn't necessarily go together," she added.

"It's a conversation. I think it's important that anybody feel like they can access my work on any level. I think people sometimes think of art as being inaccessible or snooty. Ask how many people have been to the Wadsworth [Atheneum] or the New Britain Museum of American Art. You'd be astonished how few have people been there and the reason they haven't been there is they think there is nothing there for them," Shields said.

"Anything you want to say or think or feel about a piece of art on the wall is perfectly fine. Your opinion is just as valuable as the guy who wrote that art history book. People should be surrounded by art that's meaningful. My work is a conversation with everybody, not just those who can 'understand' it." **NL**

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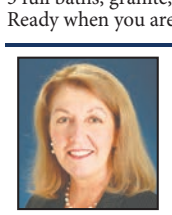

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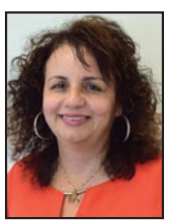

Bea Goddard
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Slice of LIFE

photos by Mark Jahne

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Hartford Saengerbund Bierfest

1. Longtime club member Alfred Meier gets the potato pancakes started on the griddle. **2.** Mayor Roy Zartarian greets the audience. People came from all over central Connecticut and as far away as Boston and Chicopee, Mass. **3.** Mayor Zartarian, in hat and with assistance from Co-Chairman Freddie Meier, taps the first keg at the opening ceremony. Per German tradition, the burgermeister, or mayor, must tap the keg and declare the beer fit for consumption. **4.** The Bier Tent was a busy place all three days. **5.** Helmut Stibi cooks up schnitzel. **6.** Alois Weber grills up wursts and leberkase (veal loaf). **7.** The trio Almdudler Unplugged from Pfahlheim, Baden-Wurttemberg, came to Newington to play all the popular Oktoberfest and party songs. Baden-Wurttemberg is Connecticut's sister state in Germany. **8.** Cakes and coffee were sold in the kaffeestube by, from left, Brigitte Steile, Helga Schramma, Helga Ginn and Anni Hager. **9.** Young and old alike enjoyed doing traditional German dances.

10. John and Heidi Frank staffed the ticket booth. **11.** Thom Sawyer was one of the many servers in the Bier Tent. **12.** Kimme Lawton donned a traditional German dirndl to sell shots of Jaegermesiter and other varities of schnapps. **13.** Kylie Schemmel-Sepko and her daughter Katja Gerlinde Sepko came dressed in traditional attire. **14.** The HSB Schwertbrüder (sword dancers) entertained the crowd. **15.** Schuhplattler dancers perform. **16.** Handling the admission gate were Shirley Frederich and HSB President Amy Swank. **17.** Maria Meier sings the German and American national anthems at the opening ceremony.

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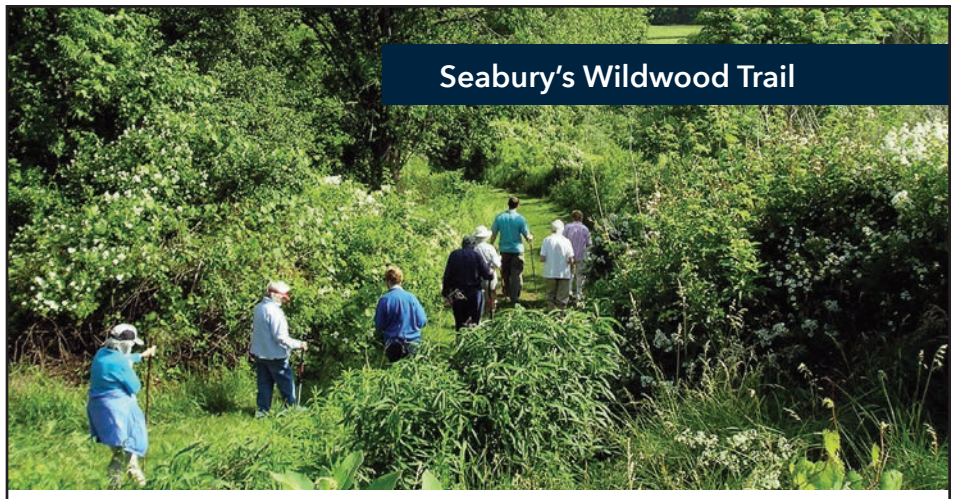

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Photos by Lisa Brisson

The Sequin-Level Lodge 140, Ancient Free and Accepted Masons of Newington, is holding its annual October Food Drive to benefit those in need in town. Worshipful Master Steve Gorman, Auxiliary Steward and Communications Outreach Chairman Chris Woodward and Junior Warden Lee Martin show some of the donations they have collected so far.

They aim to serve

Sequin Level Lodge 140 sets its sights high for annual food drive

by Mark Jahne
Editor

It's one thing to hold a food drive. Lots of schools, churches and community organizations do that.

But it's quite another to set a target of 3,000 pounds of nonperishable sustenance. That's what Masonic Sequin-Level Lodge 140 A.F. & A.M. hopes to accomplish.

The Masons conduct an annual fall food drive to benefit the town's food bank. This year they are partnering with the Newington Hunger Action Team, a local community offshoot of Foodshare. The HAT team is comprised of representatives from local community groups and organizations, the town Human Services Department and Foodshare.

Outreach coordinator Chris Woodward said the goal is to make as big an impact as possible to keep the food bank shelves well stocked. He noted that it assists more than 400 households that need a helping hand.

The lodge's first food drive two years ago raised 750 pounds over the course of two weeks, with little more promotion than a few Facebook posts. Last year, the Masons dedicated the entire month of October to the food drive and collected 2,400 pounds.

This effort is of particular importance to him. Woodward was seriously ill a few years ago at the same time that his wife gave birth to triplet girls. His family had to depend upon the food bank to survive until he recovered his health and was able to return to work.

Now, he wants to show his gratitude by giving back. Lodge President Steve Gorman explained why the Masons undertake projects such as this.

"Lodges are chartered to serve the community. You'll see us involved in many efforts in the town. The food drive is one of the things we latched onto," he said.

Members like it because it is a tangible activity and they can see the results of their work. There are

"We do a lot of things for the town, but we do them very quietly."

–Steve Gorman

approximately 280 members of the lodge, located at 80 Walsh Ave. in the center of town.

"They'll turn out for things like this," he added.

Gorman explained that Masonry is the oldest world-wide fraternity in existence and is open to men of all faiths and backgrounds. Women are allowed to participate through the Order of the Eastern Star and there is also a formal organization for children.

"Chris took it upon himself to start it," Lee Martin, junior warden of the temple, said. "We started a little bit earlier this year."

"We're a third of the way there and we haven't officially started yet," Woodward said in early October.

The collection runs through the end of October. In addition to Newington HAT, the temple is also partnering with U.S. Marine Corps Reserve Fox Co. 225 in Plainville.

This is not all they do. The Masons are active in other areas of community service but tend to keep a low profile.

"We do three blood drives at the beginning of the year with the American Red Cross," Martin said.

"We also do the child identification program," Gorman added. "We do a lot of things for the town, but we do them very quietly."

That program is conducted in partnership with the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children. The most prominent aspect of the program is when the Masons bring it to the annual Extravaganza in Mill Pond Park.

The temple is also involved with the annual Waterfall Festival on Market Square. Many of its members also belong to the Shriners on the Berlin Turnpike.

Sequin-Level Lodge 140 is hosting an open house from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Oct. 15 for anyone interested in learning more about Freemasonry. All residents are encouraged to stop by and contribute to the food drive.

The lodge was constituted on June 26, 1940. It's motto is "making good men better." **NL**

Anyone interested in learning more about Sequin-Level Lodge 140 may go to ctfreemasons.net and click on Newington, or look for its special fall food drive Facebook page. Those who would like to learn more about local lodge activities can send an email to sl140secretary@ctfreemasons.net.

Photo by Lisa Brisson

Members of the Sequin-Level Lodge 140, Ancient Free and Accepted Masons of Newington, pose with some of the donations of food and household products purchased with donations to its annual food drive.

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October calendar

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
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2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					

2 **Kiwanis Big K Flea Market**, 8 a.m. to 2 p.m., Constitution Square, also Oct. 9, 16, 23 and 30

2 **Annual Blessing of the Animals** Worship Service, 9 a.m., Grace Episcopal Church, 124 Maple Hill Ave., followed by Celebration of Animals educational program, 11 a.m., parish hall and Animal Blessings, 12:30 p.m., Memorial Garden.

3 **Cinema City,** 1 p.m., children's film "Angry Bird Movie," Lucy Robbins Welles Library, 95 Cedar St., 860-665-8700 or newingtonct.gov/library

3 **Let's Make Music Together,** 6 p.m., for ages 2-4, Lucy Robbins Welles Library, 95 Cedar St., 860-665-8700 or newingtonct.gov/library

3 **Oktoberfest,** 6:30 p.m., Sequin Level-Lodge 140 AF & AM, 80 Walsh Ave., $25 in advance, $35 at the door

3 **Westford Hill Distillers** of Ashford, 7 p.m., registration required, Lucy Robbins Welles Library, 95 Cedar St., 860-665-8700 or newingtonct.gov/library

4 **Play with Us,** 10:15 a.m., for families with young children who have special needs, Lucy Robbins Welles Library, 95 Cedar St., 860-665-8700 or newingtonct.gov/library, also Oct. 11

4 **Let's Make Music Together**, noon, for ages 2-4, Lucy Robbins Welles Library, 95 Cedar St., 860-665-8700 or newingtonct.gov/library

4 **Half-Day Fun,** 2:30 p.m., Lucy Robbins Welles Library, 95 Cedar St., 860-665-8700 or newingtonct.gov/library, also Oct. 18

4 **The Joy of Coloring:** An Adult Coloring Group, 6:30 p.m., registration required, Lucy Robbins Welles Library, 95 Cedar St., 860-665-8700 or newingtonct.gov/library, also 2 p.m. Oct. 26

4 **Caregiving Basics,** 6:30 p.m., Lucy Robbins Welles Library, 95 Cedar St., 860-665-8700, newingtonct.gov/library

5 **Flu Clinic,** 9 a.m. to noon, Newington Senior & Disabled Center, 120 Cedar St., 860-721-2822 or ccthd.org

5 **Pop Up Kitchen – Apple Pie Bites,** 6:30 p.m., for grades 6-12, Lucy Robbins Welles Library, 95 Cedar St., 860-665-8700 or newingtonct.gov/library

6 **Tech 4 U,** 5:30 p.m., registration required, Lucy Robbins Welles Library, 95 Cedar St., 860-665-8700 or newingtonct.gov/library, also 1:30 p.m. Oct. 20

6 **Family Storytime**, 6:30 p.m., Lucy Robbins Welles Library, 95 Cedar St., 860-665-8700 or newingtonct.gov/library, also Oct. 13, 20 and 27

6 **Evening Book Discussion**, 7 p.m., Lucy Robbins Welles Library, 95 Cedar St., 860-665-8700 or newingtonct.gov/library

8 **Oktoberfest,** 2 p.m. until late evening, Hartford Saengerbund, 719 North Mountain Road, $5 admission, children under 12 get in free, 860-953-8967 or hartfordsaengerbund.org

11 **National Alliance** on **Mental Illness,** 7 p.m., Newington Senior & Disabled Center, 120 Cedar St., 860-205-9542 or 860-830-2129

12 **Cinema City,** 1 p.m., children's film "The Jungle Book," Lucy Robbins Welles Library, 95 Cedar St., 860-665-8700 or newingtonct.gov/library

12 **Film "The Killers,"** 6:30 p.m., Lucy Robbins Welles Library, 95 Cedar St., 860-665-8700 or newingtonct.gov/library

13 **MS Support Group,** noon to 2 p.m., Newington Senior & Disabled Center, 120 Cedar St., 860-667-1314 or 860-236-2751

13 **Author Laura Bradford,** 1 p.m., registration required, Lucy Robbins Welles Library, 95 Cedar St., 860-665-8700 or newingtonct.gov/library

13 **Pumpkin-Palooza**, 6 p.m., Lucy Robbins Welles Library, 95 Cedar St., 860-665-8700 or newingtonct.gov/library

13 **Teen Pumpkinpalooza**, 6 p.m., for grades 6-12, Lucy Robbins Welles Library, 95 Cedar St., 860-665-8700 or newingtonct.gov/library

13 **Tech Troubleshooting with Teens**, 6:30 p.m., Lucy Robbins Welles Library, 95 Cedar St., 860-665-8700 or newingtonct.gov/library

15 **Open House & Food Drive**, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., Sequin Level-Lodge 140 AF & AM, 80 Walsh Ave.

15 **Tales to Tails,** 1 p.m., read to a certified therapy dog, Lucy Robbins Welles Library, 95 Cedar St., 860-665-8700 or newingtonct.gov/library

17 **Books and Babies,** 9:15 a.m., for ages 0-12 months and a caregiver, registration required, Lucy Robbins Welles Library, 95 Cedar St., 860-665-8700 or newingtonct.gov/library

17 **Tschudin Chocolates & Confections** of Middletown, 7 p.m., registration required, Lucy Robbins Welles Library, 95 Cedar St., 860-665-8700 or newingtonct.gov/library

17 **Parent-Child Workshop,** 6 p.m., for parents and children ages 1-3, registration required, Lucy Robbins Welles Library, 95 Cedar St., 860-665-8700 or newingtonct.gov/library, also 10:15 a.m. Oct. 18 and 25

18 **Stories and Art**, noon, for ages 2–4

and a caregiver, registration required, Lucy Robbins Welles Library, 95 Cedar St., 860-665-8700 or newingtonct.gov/library

18 **Movies and More @ the Library: "Mother's Day",** 1 p.m., Lucy Robbins Welles Library, 95 Cedar St., 860-665-8700 or newingtonct.gov/library

18 **Half Day Fun: Middle School Edition**, 2:30 p.m., for grades 5-8, Lucy Robbins Welles Library, 95 Cedar St., 860-665-8700 or newingtonct.gov/library

18 **Estate Planning,** 6:30 p.m., Lucy Robbins Welles Library, 95 Cedar St., 860-665-8700 or newingtonct.gov/library

19 **Chess Club,** 4 p.m., Lucy Robbins Welles Library, 95 Cedar St., 860-665-8700 or newingtonct.gov/library

19 **Jr. Cookbook Club,** 6:30 p.m., for grades K-2, registration required, Lucy Robbins Welles Library, 95 Cedar St., 860-665-8700 or newingtonct.gov/library

19 **Film "Mogambo,"** 6:30 p.m., Lucy Robbins Welles Library, 95 Cedar St., 860-665-8700 or newingtonct.gov/library

20 **Cozytime Stories**, 4 p.m., for grades K-2, Lucy Robbins Welles Library, 95 Cedar St., 860-665-8700 or newingtonct.gov/library

22 **Construction Club,** 1 p.m., Lucy Robbins Welles Library, 95 Cedar St., 860-665-8700 or newingtonct.gov/library

22 **Friends of the Library Reception,** 1:30-3:30 p.m., Lucy Robbins Welles Library, 95 Cedar St., 860-665-8700, newingtonct.gov/library

25 **GFWC Newington/Wethersfield Woman's Club,** 6:30 p.m., Newington Senior & Disabled Center, 120 Cedar St., 860-666-4371

26 **Business Breakfast 411**, 7:30 a.m., Stew Leonard's, 3475 Berlin Turnpike, 860-666-2089

26 **Flu Clinic,** 2:30-6 p.m., Newington Senior & Disabled Center, 120 Cedar St., 860-721-2822 or ccthd.org

26 **Cookbook Club,** 6:30 p.m., for grades 3-6, registration required, Lucy Robbins Welles Library, 95 Cedar St., 860-665-8700 or newingtonct.gov/library

26 **Film "On the Beach,** 6:30 p.m., Lucy Robbins Welles Library, 95 Cedar St., 860-665-8700 or newingtonct.gov/library

27 **Tales to Tails,** 4:30 p.m., read to a certified therapy dog, registration required, Lucy Robbins Welles Library, 95 Cedar St., 860-665-8700 or newingtonct.gov/library

27 **Get to Know Your iPad**, 6:30 p.m., Lucy Robbins Welles Library, 95 Cedar St., 860-665-8700 or newingtonct.gov/library

28 **Make A Creepcake: Cupcake Decorating for Teens,** 6 p.m., for grades 6-12, Lucy Robbins Welles Library, 95 Cedar St., 860-665-8700 or newingtonct.gov/library

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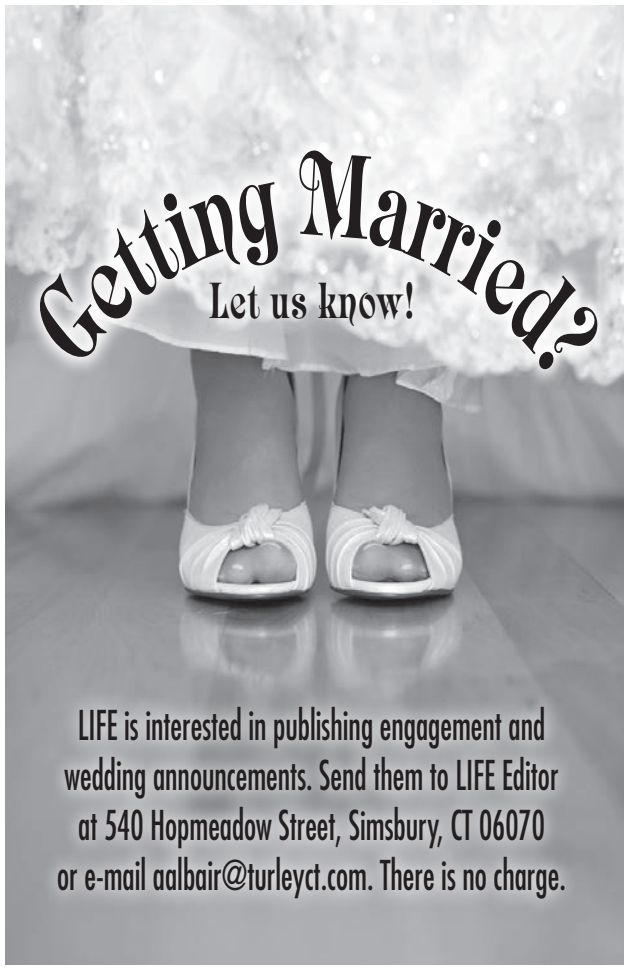
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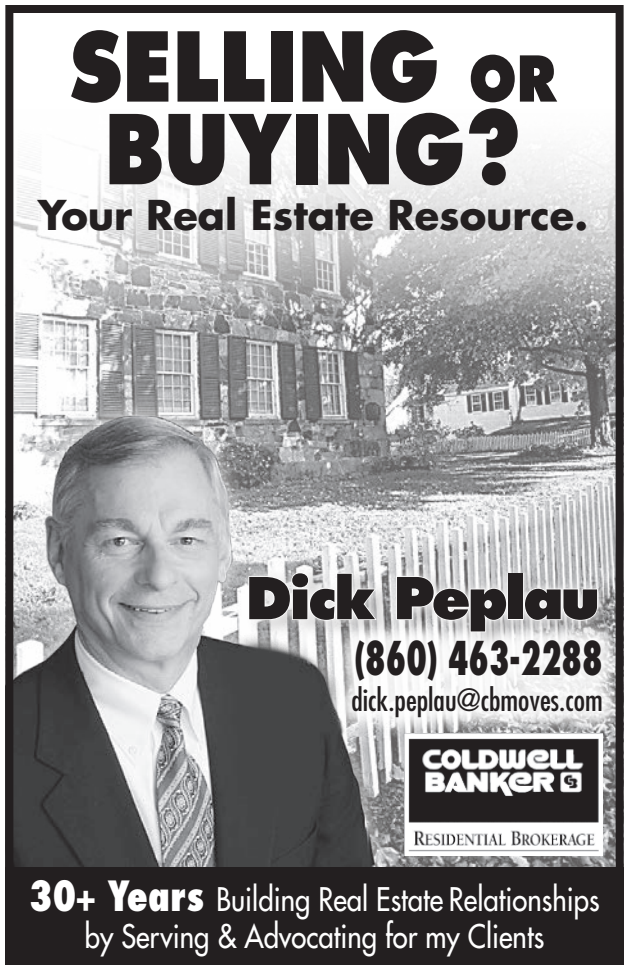

News roundup

Rotary donates supplies

1. The Newington Rotary Club once again participated in the town Human Services Department's annual drive for back to school supplies by donating 55 backpacks, 40 flash drives, 54 three-ring binders and 12 dozen pens for distribution to local families in financial need.

Shown with town social worker Pam Wassik, second from left, are Rotarians Elizabeth Sheridan, Mal Murthy, Ed Silverstein and Ed's wife Claire Silverstein. The donated items are valued at more than $1,600, making it Newington Rotary's largest effort to date to assist the town in providing conventional education materials for schoolchildren.

St. Mary School closes

There was one less school in town when children returned to the classrooms to start the 2016-2017 academic year. St. Mary School shut its doors, reportedly due to a lack of sufficient funding to maintain operations until next June.

Parents, teachers and administrators were informed of this decision only two weeks before classes were scheduled to resume. The closure affected more than 100 children.

According to its website, the school had been in operation since 1958. Families were encouraged to enroll their children in other nearby Catholic schools, including the new partnership school created out of St. Brigid in Elmwood and St. Augustine in Hartford.

Oktoberfest means a party

2. The Hartford Saengerbund will celebrate Oktoberfest with a day and evening of German food, beer and music starting at 2 p.m. Oct. 8. Guests will enjoy a selection of wursts, sauerkraut, potato salad and more, as well as Oktoberfest beers and other beverages.

Live music will be performed by Scha-Musi and Tommy on the Tuba. Admission is $5 and children under 12 get in free. The German-American club is located at 719 North Mountain Road. Call 860-953-8967 or see hartfordsaengerbund.org for additional information.

1.

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Family Day fun

3. Staff, residents, family members and friends of Middlewoods of Newington independent and assisted living community gathered recently for a Family Day fiesta. This event features a different theme each year and is a celebration of family and friendship.

This year's fiesta included a Mexican buffet prepared by the dining services team and entertainment by Fiesta Del Norte, a strolling mariachi band. Festivities also included a margarita stand and plenty of sombreros. Shown in the photo are Executive Director Stacy Kesl with her daughter Madalyn and Middlewoods residents Mary Snetro, Louise Bernard and Sara Dutko.

EMTs keep busy

Newington Emergency Medical Services responded to 154 emergency calls during the month of July. Of these, 144 were handled by the on-duty crew and seven by members responding from home to staff the second ambulance. The other three calls were to stand by at community events.

July saw NEMS perform 40 basic life support transports and 63 advanced life support, or paramedic level, transports. Volunteers gave 1,243 hours of their time to serve the community. **NL**

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Photo by Allie Rivera

Seventeen-year-old Jeremy Rippel serves as the senior class president at Newington High School. He is a member of the Student Council, a variety of clubs and athletics, all while maintaining a rigorous course load.

Student of the month

NHS senior class president is active with clubs, sports and studies

by Allie Rivera
Staff Writer

With the start of the academic year comes a packed schedule for many students, including 17-year-old Jeremy Rippel, who serves as the president of the senior class at Newington High School.

A completely separate group from the Student Council, the class officers are charged with planning and carrying out fund raising throughout the year for events such as the senior prom and class trips, as well as to help pay dues for students who may be unable to afford them.

"Last year we were able to donate half of what we earned to the Newington Food Bank," Jeremy said.

He has been a class officer since arriving at Newington High.

"I remember hearing about it my freshman year and immediately being interested," he said. "I ran for vice president because I wanted to spend that first year seeing what it was about."

Jeremy continued to serve as class vice president his sophomore year as well, but after two years he felt ready to move even further up the ladder.

"My junior year I decided, alright, I'll go for it," he recalled.

As president, Jeremy is looking forward to working with his fellow officers on the larger events at the end of the year. Class officers are separate from the Student Council, but Jeremy is also a member of that organization, serving for the first time this year as the Board of Education student representative.

"I'd always been a part of Student Council and I always wanted to be an officer," he said.

He will report to the board at each of its meetings on what is happening within the school.

"I think I'm a pretty good public speaker and I think I got that from my dad," Jeremy said.

In addition to serving his classmates in those two positions, he stays active in a variety of clubs at the school. This year he was elected to serve as the secretary of the Key Club, a national student-led service organization affiliated with Kiwanis.

"I like being engaged in the Newington community," Jeremy said. "A lot of times people say that this generation is bad, but I'd like to think we're pretty good people."

He is also an active member of the school's German Club, which meets to discuss and learn about various aspects of German culture.

"I consider myself an American, but if you go way back on my father's side they were from Germany, so I thought, why not learn about it?"

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"A lot of times people say that this generation is bad, but I'd like to think we're pretty good people."

Jeremy Rippel

Jeremy said.

He also belongs to the Diversity Club.

"It's meant to send a positive message," he said. "You are who you are and that's amazing."

Jeremy chose to join each of these groups during his sophomore year, leaving his freshman year to get acquainted with his new surroundings.

"Freshman year, I was just getting adjusted," he said. "Sophomore year, though, I'm like, I know what I'm doing, let's go for it."

Sophomore year was also when he began getting involved in athletics by joining the cross-country team and track and field.

"I found out I'm pretty good at hurdles," he said with a small laugh. "Not great, but pretty good."

He also swims on the school team, specializing in the breaststroke.

"I'd never competitively swam in my life. I did that first day and I was tired, but I was smiling," he said. "Swimming is the best sport for you because it works out your entire body."

Tracking his progress as he strives to become a better swimmer is a rewarding part of the sport.

"I started out at 1:26 and I've dropped it down by five seconds," he said. "I work hard at it and I just keep improving."

That philosophy of hard work is a key motivating factor in all aspects of Jeremy's life, from his wide range of clubs and activities to his studies. This year he is taking a full load of rigorous classes.

"I took all the hardest possible levels," he said. "I just really like working. It's really satisfying to go out and see what you accomplish."

He plans to continue with that work ethic in the future and hopes to study business.

"If you really work hard, I think you can achieve anything you set your mind to," he said. **NL**

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LIFE *in the classroom*

Spanish becomes full-year course at the middle schools

by Allie Rivera
Staff Writer

Students taking Spanish at the middle school level are in for "gigante" changes this year.

For the first time, the foreign language will be offered as a core subject area that also includes math, English, social studies and science.

"It's really an academic class and now it's being treated as such," World Language Coordinator Rossana Vassal said.

Previously, Spanish at the middle school level was a half-year course. The full content was split in two, with students taking half of a year in the seventh grade and the other half in the eighth grade. Vassal said that led to complications.

"There would be some times where students would have almost a whole year between one Spanish class and the next," she said. "It made it extremely difficult for continuity."

With that break in the learning, ninth grade Spanish teachers would often have to spend time re-teaching information that had been lost.

"Learning a language is one of those things where, if you don't use it, you kind of lose it, and it takes a while to get back into it," Vassal said.

"In prior years, ninth grade teachers at Newington High School would have to fill gaps for students who acquired learning during the first half of the year only," Supervisor of Secondary Education Kristen Freeman said. "Providing Spanish as a year-long course provides for an equitable transition for all students from eighth to ninth grade."

While the switch to full-year Spanish in the eighth grade will lead to greater continuity, this also means that the language will no longer be offered at the seventh grade level. Vassal has hopes, however, of returning the program as soon as possible.

"Our goal is to bring it in as a full-year course to the seventh grade," she said. "Unfortunately, because of budget issues, it was not feasible for this year."

According to Vassal, this aspect of the program shift has led to some mixed reviews from parents, especially those of students leaving the sixth grade – where some Spanish was taught – and entering seventh grade, where there will be no foreign language class.

"It makes it difficult," Vassal conceded. "The goal is obviously to see it back in the seventh grade and really get them geared up to taking it at the high school level."

Although this aspect of the change is not ideal, she said the amount gained for eighth grade

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"Providing Spanish as a year-long course provides for an equitable transition for all students from eighth to ninth grade."

Kristen Freeman

students into their high school years is significant.

"There were gaps in the learning because, as a half-year course, there is only so much you could do," she said. "This is just going to make a world of difference."

In addition to providing greater continuity for students, the Spanish teachers at the middle schools are now part of the core academic teams and will meet with teachers from the other subjects on a regular basis.

"The Spanish teachers are excited to be part of the eighth grade teams at both John Wallace and Martin Kellogg," Freeman said.

"As grade eight team members, the Spanish teachers now have the opportunity to collaborate with grade level colleagues so that they can discuss important issues related to instruction and assessment, learn from one other, and improve their own practice to improve student learning."

Spanish teachers also meet regularly on the vertical level, bringing together educators from all grade levels to discuss curriculum and how to best prepare students.

"We're raising the rigor, we're raising the bar," Vassal said. "Our goal is for them to be proficient in the language, and we're hoping that the earlier we can get kids started with the language, the higher we can get them to go."

Students at the eighth grade level will now have greater opportunities to further their learning. As a core class, students will now be able to reach out to their teachers during a block called REACH, which provides them times to connect with teachers and get extra help.

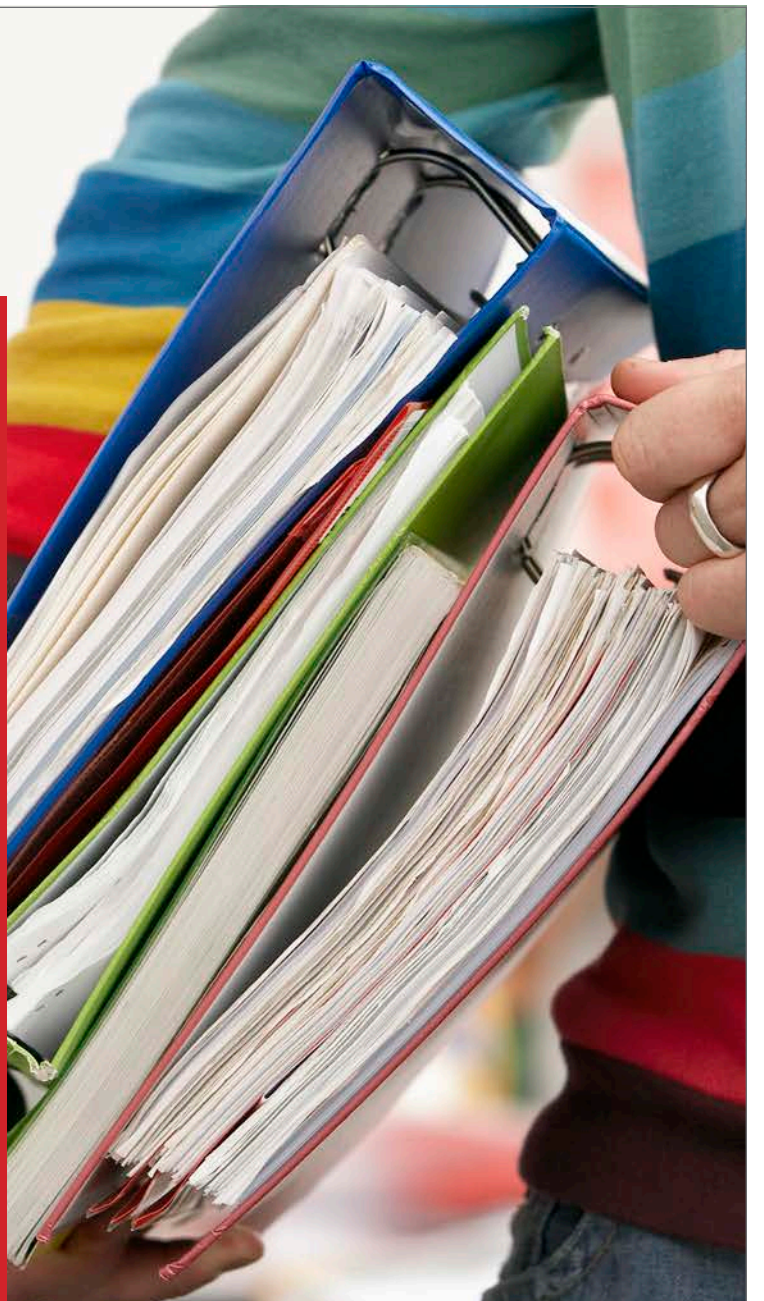
"In prior years, the Spanish teachers were teaching students of other grade levels when eighth graders sought extra help," Freeman said.

If students required additional help in Spanish, they would have to seek out their teachers either before or after school. That was a difficult task for many.

"It really makes a difference that kids who need extra help now can easily get it," Vassal said.

With the start of the academic year and the beginning of the new Spanish program, Vassal is excited to see how the language grows in schools and she is eager to see it expand in the future.

"We want this to grow," she said. "We want these students to not only be knowledgeable in the language, but able to actually use it." **NL**



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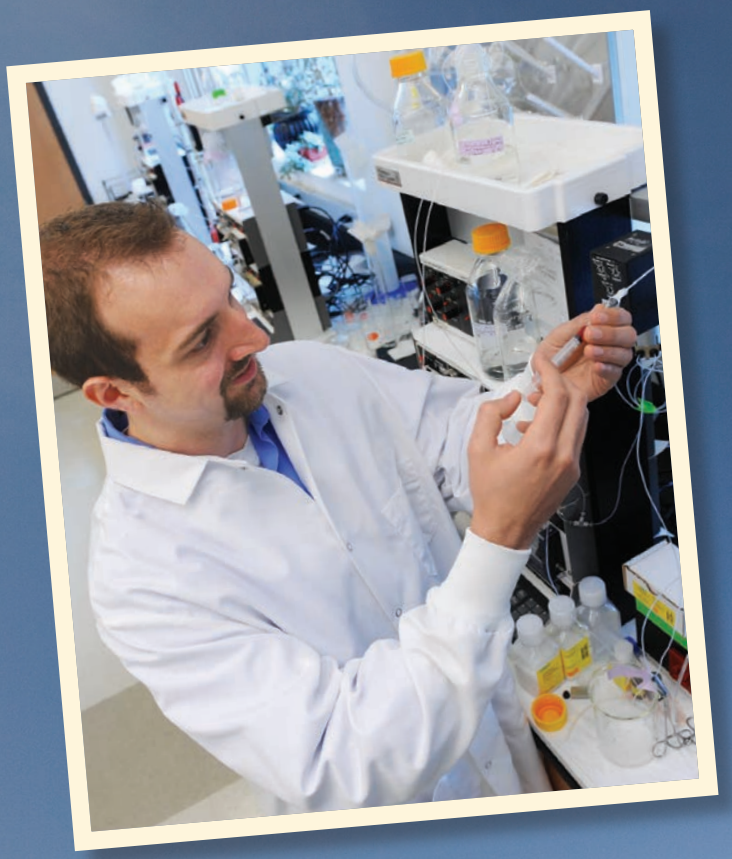

"The majority of my classes at Eastern included a strong lab component. I was doing what scientists do — getting outside of the classroom and working with the latest scientific equipment. Eastern really set the groundwork for me to go to graduate school."

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Party time at Autism Families CONNECTicut

Autism Families CONNECTicut held an art auction and wine and beer tasting Sept. 9 at its new facility on North Mountain Road. Guests were able to purchase art created by children and adults on the autism spectrum.

1.) Jacqueline Procyk and Leah Baily Moon enjoyed themselves and mingled with guests. The mother-daughter team founded the nonprofit organization. 2.) Wayne Carini of Velocity Network's "Chasing Classic Cars" brought the 1949 Buick Roadmaster made famous in the motion picture "Rain Man" starring Tom Cruise and Dustin Hoffman. 3.) The Rich Goldstein Trio performed live jazz music.

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People notes

Horace Scott Jr. was selected as one of two winners nationwide of the George H. Seal Memorial Trophy, awarded by the Disabled American Veterans and DAV Auxiliary. A Navy veteran, Scott has given more than 24,000 hours of volunteer time to assist fellow veterans in the VA Connecticut Healthcare System.

Kyle Hunt was awarded a college scholarship from the Hartford Saengerbund, a local German-American club. Club President Amy Swank stands at right and seated is Kyle's aunt, Christine Wilson.

Hartford Saengerbund President Amy Swank presented **Shaylynn Frazon** with a college scholarship.

Amanda Rodriguez earned first honors and **Alicia Rodriguez** made high honors for the fourth marking period at Mercy High School.

Kelsey Simeone was named to the dean's list at Mount Saint Mary College. She was also accepted into Kappa Delta Pi, the international education honors society.

Sara Mazur graduated magna cum laude with a bachelor of arts degree in elementary education and a bachelor of arts degree in biology from the University of Rhode Island.

Alizandra Stamm earned a bachelor of science degree in supply chain management, leadership studies, from the University of Rhode Island.

Emilie Sienko was named to the honor roll at Kingswood Oxford School.

Katherine Durant and **Alexander Ericson** were named to the dean's list at Merrimack College.

State Rep. Gary Byron received the Outstanding Advocacy Award from the North Central Regional Mental Health Board.

Sebriana Ciarcia was named to the dean's list at Fairleigh Dickinson University's Florham campus.

Carly Cruff was named to the dean's list at Endicott College.

Christopher Delzangle was named to the president's honor roll at Bismarck State College.

Brian Dunn was named to the dean's list at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute.

Petr Nikitin was named to the dean's list at the Rochester Institute of Technology.

The Connecticut Association of Healthcare Executives presented its first Integrity Award to **Gerald F. Culliton**, director of the VA Connecticut Healthcare System.

Jamie Zelek was named to the dean's list at Champlain College.

Camden Tatsapaugh and **Desiree Burhans** earned high honors on the dean's list at the University of New Hampshire. **Erica Thureson** earned honors.

Melissa Florio earned a master of science degree in education from the College of Saint Rose.

Peter Richmond was named to the dean's list at Union College.

Sean Harlow was named to the dean's list at Becker College.

Kaitlyn Wilson earned a bachelor's degree in nursing from the University of Tampa. **NL**

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Pasta for scholarships

The Newington Rotary Club's recently Pasta Dinner fundraiser took in more than $1,500 that will be added to a charity account benefiting the club's annual scholarship fund for college-bound high school seniors. Newington Rotary has awarded more than $20,000 in scholarships over the past 10 years.

1.) Rotarians LeeAnn Morrone and David Johnson are ready to head for Hawaii. 2.) Volunteer Gary Andreski finds a new use for leftover pasta. 3.) Rotarians and volunteers gather around pasta chefs Nick Mastroianni and Gary Tachak. 4.) The Tedeschi family chose a patriotic pose. Pictured, from left, are Rotarian Dave Tedeschi, Dino Tedeschi, Mario Tedeschi and Roberto Tedeschi. 5.) Volunteer pasta chefs Nick Mastroianni and Gary Tachak take a break.

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Dealing with violence

Police chief discusses police shootings, race relations and more

by Mark Jahne
Editor

The world of law enforcement has experienced a dramatic change in recent months, following the premeditated killing of police officers in Dallas and Baton Rouge. It is also reeling from increased attention brought to cases involving the deaths of black men in altercations with white cops.

Police Chief Stephen Clark said these turns of events have had an impact on the men and women who patrol the streets of Newington every day and night.

"There's a lack of respect and more challenging the authority of police officers. We see it here. We see it from kids who are 14 or 15 years old using profanity," he said. "The rhetoric needs to be toned down."

He said it is an entirely new working environment for the officers.

"There's always the potential for it to escalate into a use of force situation," Clark said.

He added that more people are choosing to challenge what he called valid arrests. The chief is pleased that he has not received any formal arrest or use of force complaints, which tells him that, while the actions his officers take may not be popular, they are being taken in a professional and legal manner.

Isolated incidents where police may have acted improperly or used excessive force build mistrust and animosity, he said.

He believes that video of alleged police brutality shown on TV is heavily edited. Viewing the entire recording of the incident helps put what happened in context.

"People are judging that incident based upon that brief video," he said.

While Clark is confident in his officers, if there is a problem, he wants to hear about it and take appropriate action. The key to avoiding such situations lies in hiring the best people, ongoing training, establishing specific policies and procedures that must be followed, and personal accountability, he said.

Photo by Mark Jahne

Police Chief Stephen Clark

In the event of a serious incident, the state's attorney's office would almost immediately become involved in the investigation. There would also be an internal review by the police department.

He admitted that he is even more concerned about the safety of his officers than he was in the past.

"I worry about the exposure. The threat levels are definitely up. I know it weighs on the minds of the officers and it weighs on the minds of their families," he said. "It's a tough environment now. The job is much more demanding now, it's more challenging than it's ever been at a lot more levels."

Clark believes it is helpful to have officers on the force who speak other languages. Newington has cops who can converse with the public in Portuguese, Spanish and Farsi.

Clark also worries that the public may be losing faith in the police. More and more people are applying for permission to carry a personal firearm.

"I'm getting writer's cramp signing off on pistol permits," he said.

This increases the chances that police will interact more frequently with people who are carrying a gun,

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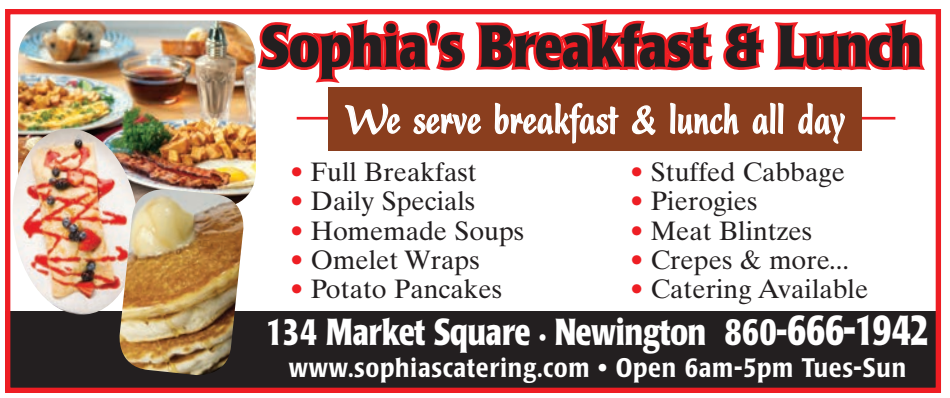

which adds stress to the situation.

"When somebody brings a weapon, it changes the whole dynamic. You want to make sure that those encounters go smoothly," he said.

He opposes "open carry" laws in 31 states that allow citizens to walk around in public with clearly visible firearms. Connecticut does not allow this practice.

Clark said the response to the shooting of multiple officers in Dallas was complicated by the fact that several people participating in a nearby protest march were carrying guns, including military-style rifles. Texas is an open carry state.

As officers raced to the scene, they saw armed citizens running down the street. Were they among the shooters? Were they people fleeing the shooting? It cost valuable time to sort that out.

Other area towns are reporting a decrease in the number of motor vehicle stops made by their officers. These stops have long been considered an effective method of proactive law enforcement. They can lead to the discovery of drunken drivers, drugs and wanted felons, as well as the recovery of stolen property, among other things.

Clark said he has seen a slight decline in motor vehicle stops by his officers. These interactions are not as mundane as they used to be and some officers may opt for safety over presumed risk.

In the current climate, he said they might ask themselves if the stop is worth the potential of a problem that will land them in hot water.

The department makes "a lot of pretextual stops" for equipment violations, including broken headlights or taillights and obscured markers plates, he said. Most of them are not an issue.

"Two-thirds of the stops we make result in a written or verbal warning. We're looking for compliance, to make the roads safe," he said.

Everyone has biases; it's part of being human, Clark said. For police officers, the important thing is to identify any biases and make sure that they are eliminated from decisions made on the street. His personnel received bias-based training to help them with that.

"We have a job to do. It is important for us to go out there each and every day to protect the public," he said.

Another significant change is the advent of the smart phone. Clark calls this an age of transparency in which even the most simple and non-confrontational interactions between the police and the public are recorded by people watching the event unfold.

"If it's a major incident, there's a lot of people [recording it on their phones]," he added.

Videos can often be helpful in an investigation. All of the department's cruisers have video cameras mounted in the cars, and that system was recently updated with new technology.

Clark is not a fan of police body cameras because there are so many important, but unanswered, questions regarding their proper use. Certain police-related conversations are not matters of public record, such as discussions of an individual's health, the identities of sexual assault victims, or incidents involving juveniles. So do the officers need to continually turn their cameras on and off to avoid recording this legally protected information?

There is also the potential time and cost involved with downloading and storing all of that video.

Clark, a Newington native, joined the department in 1986 and remembers starting out on the midnight shift.

Pretextual stops were a major part of his daily duties and he quickly learned that it was the quality, and not the quantity, of those stops that made a difference.

"I made two DUI arrests in one night based on equipment violations," Clark recalled.

He considers community policing a vital element in forming positive relations between law enforcement and the public.

These relationships can help resolve the problem if a major incident occurs.

"You have to reach out to the community so you don't have that us versus them attitude," Clark said.

Newington has a full-time community service officer and a resource officer in the high school.

The department also participates in public outreach at numerous events and holds an annual citizen's police academy and youth academy. **NL**

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Princess is a 3-year-old terrier, pit bull and boxer mix. She is best suited for life in a single-family home and any children should be 12 or older. Other cats and dogs in the house are fine with her. She is an active pooch and needs lots of exercise; the best match for her is a family with previous active dog experience. Ongoing obedience training is part of her adoption plan.

Inquiries about adoption may be made at the Connecticut Humane Society, 701 Russell Road, Newington. Call 860-594-4500. More information, including videos, can be found online at cthumane.org. Click on "Adopt" and "Newington." The Connecticut Humane Society is a private organization and has no time limits for adoption.

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KEITH TURLEY, Publisher

EDITORIAL
Abigail Albair, Executive Editor
aalbair@turleyct.com
Mark Jahne, Editor
Alison Jalbert, Assistant Editor

STAFF WRITERS
Alicia B. Smith, Allie Rivera, Mara Dresner, David Heuschkel, Sloan Brewster

ADVERTISING SALES
Alana DiMarco,
alana@turleyct.com, 860-264-5723

PAGE DESIGNERS
Daniel Kornegay, Cynthia Martel, Robert Sirois

GRAPHICS DEPARTMENT
Barbara Ouellette, Production Manager
ads@turleyct.com, 860-264-5523
Maureen LaBier, Production Assistant
Daniel Kornegay, Corley Fleming, Cynthia Martel, Kathy Kokoszka

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Guest editorial

Thyroid Cancer Awareness Month

by Allie Rivera
LIFE Staff

Nine years ago, my best friend heard the words that no person ever wants to hear. At age 18, she was diagnosed with thyroid cancer.

I remember distinctly how I found out about the diagnosis. Meg and I were really just starting to get to know each other and I was out to dinner with a mutual friend at our usual spot, Denny's in Westbrook, when he told me she had cancer. Every part of me froze. An 18-year-old being diagnosed with cancer was supposed to be the plot of a tragic movie, not the reality of someone I love.

At the time, I had some knowledge of the thyroid as I have a condition called hypothyroidism, and I still find it incredible how much of a person's life is affected by this relatively small, butterfly-shaped gland. Because my thyroid does not produce enough of the T3 and T4 thyroid hormones, I would experience fatigue, abnormal weight gain, mental fogginess, changes in metabolism, moodiness and depression. As a 20-year-old college student, I knew that I would have to take a synthetic thyroid medication for the rest of my life to combat these symptoms, and, frankly, that was all I needed to know. Pill makes thyroid work. Thyroid makes me work. Carry on with life.

After Meg's diagnosis, I began doing more research into this vital yet oft-neglected part of the body and found out about the wide range of issues that can come from a thyroid that does not function properly.

Hashimoto's Thyroiditis, or Hashimoto's Disease, is an autoimmune disorder in which the body's immune system fights against the thyroid, causing a person's body to swing from an overactive thyroid, or hyperthyroidism, to underactive, causing the body to stop producing the necessary thyroid hormones. Graves' Disease, another autoimmune disorder, typically results in an enlarged thyroid and can cause irritability, muscle weakness, sleeping issues, weight loss and quickened heart rate.

The more I learned about all that the thyroid could do, the more concerned I grew, but eventually I stumbled upon what seemed like good news. In the online cancer community – another thing which I never knew existed before – there was a running idea that if there was one type of cancer you could choose to get, it would be thyroid cancer. It was an idea that was at once =disturbing and encouraging. In typical cases, Meg's and my research told us, thyroid cancer patients have surgery to remove their thyroid then must remain on a high-dose synthetic thyroid medication for the rest of their life. Nothing further.

The idea of surgery is and was still daunting, but Meg is the strongest person I know and has the greatest sense of humor. She went into that surgery and after a few complications came out on the other side ready to take on the world. She started college. She played with her animals. She continued to make those around her smile and laugh on a daily basis. Being a cancer survivor at 18 was an enormous title to take, but she did it all with a strength and class that I never would have been able to show.

Two years later, when it was discovered that the cancer had come back, this time in her lymph nodes, the news was even more devastating than the first time. She texted the news to me, and as I sat in my old Honda Accord outside of a YMCA, I felt a rush of sadness, anger, disbelief and foolishness to think that something like cancer could be just a blip in someone's life.

In the time since that second diagnosis, Meg's cancer has returned three more times. At age 27, she has had five surgeries in her neck, and some of the damage from cutting that area open numerous times will now never recover.

Amazingly, yet not surprising to anyone who knows her, Meg has continued to be as strong, supportive and funny as she always has been. Regardless of how she is, she will go out of her way to ask me how I'm feeling and take care of those around her.

For many, September is a month to look forward. It's the start of a new season, a new school year, and a chance to shake off the heaviness of the summer months. But for me, Meg, and countless others affected by thyroid cancer, it is a time to reflect on what the human spirit can endure. There is no such thing as a "good" kind of cancer. It's a cruel myth that devalues the struggle that those who have survived the disease go through. But there is always the possibility of hope. **NL**

To learn more about thyroid cancer, visit www.cancer.org/cancer/thyroidcancer.

Letters to the Editor

Byron cares about people

To the Editor:

Regardless of party affiliation, please consider casting your vote for our current Newington district representative, Gary Byron.

Since his election and assignment to the legislature's bipartisan Human Services Committee, Gary has worked tirelessly to secure ongoing funding support for our developmentally disabled citizens. He has also formed personal relationships with many Newington residents and clients serviced by HARC, the Hartford Association for Retarded Citizens, along with members of other area agencies servicing developmentally disabled clients.

As nonprofits funded through the state Department of Developmental Services struggle to maintain services to our most needy, Representative Byron has devoted countless hours visiting agency programs, attending family forums, personally meeting and advising parents, guardians and direct caregivers on how best to advocate for services this population desperately needs and deserves. Gary's positive voting record on this topic certainly speaks for itself.

Representative Byron's approachability, sincerity, passion and dedication has been an amazing breath of fresh air.

Returning him to the legislature for a second term will help to ensure that the ongoing funding challenges for our district's developmentally disabled folks will have a greater measure of future success.

Florence M. Guite

Editor's note: Guite is a member of the HARC board of directors and the parent/guardian of a developmentally disabled HARC client.

Backs Shulman for election

To the Editor:

Unlike the scenario in our national elections, Newington is fortunate to have two honorable candidates vying to represent our town in the state legislature.

While I believe Gary Byron has done an estimable job serving, I also know that Joshua Shulman is the man that Newington needs going forward.

Josh was the salutatorian of the Newington High School Class of 2006. He received his B.A. in 2009 from the University of Connecticut as a political science major, honors scholar, and achieved the prestigious honor of Phi Beta Kappa.

In 2013, he received his law degree from the UConn School of Law.

Josh is currently serving his third term on the Newington Board of Education, having first been elected in 2011 while still in law school. Josh served as my vice chairman from 2013-2015 as well as heading subcommittees on curriculum and Newington Teachers Association contract negotiations.

His input as a board member has been consistently noteworthy and valuable.

Joshua Shulman is fiercely bright, energetic, articulate and well versed on all the issues important to Newington.

Please join me in supporting Joshua Shulman on Election Day.

Dr. Marc Finkelstein

Editor's note: Dr. Finkelstein is a past chairman of the Board of Education.

Supports Byron for legislature

To the Editor:

I've never written a letter supporting an elected official. Gary Byron has been one of the very few who has proven to be honest, dedicated, thoughtful and always interested in his constituents, as well as the town he represents.

Those times I've had a question or issue, Gary has always phoned, replied to letters, and been most helpful in addressing them.

There are very few elected officials, especially in Connecticut, that I would find worthy of my vote, and of asking others to consider supporting. But an honest and sincere person can make a difference.

We need a lot more like Gary Byron. Please consider supporting this hard-working, honest representative.

John Hoyle

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BY MARK DIXON
WFSB METEOROLOGIST [AMS]

5 years ago, this month!

Do you remember where you were the last weekend of October, 2011? I was actually on the Cape for Halloween experiencing a cold and windy rain, unlike everyone else back in Connecticut. It was not until the drive back that I realized the magnitude of what transpired.

2011 was quite the year for extreme weather here in Southern New England. In June, there was the long track tornado (EF3) that traveled just north of our border in Massachusetts. Then, roughly 2 months after Irene hit the region, it was October 29th and 30th that "Snowtober" or "Storm Alfred" wreaked havoc on the Nutmeg State (keep in mind naming snowstorms is a WFSB tradition that dates back to 1971 and the days of the Travelers Weather Service). It was heavy, wet snow in tandem with fully leafed trees that led to widespread damage and the state's worst power outage with approximately 880,000 customers being impacted (surpassing Irene's ~800,000 outages). Halloween festivities for many had to be postponed or cancelled. For comparison -- Sandy, exactly one year later to the day, only led to ~650,000 outages.

The totals from Alfred across Connecticut ranged from just a couple of inches, to two feet! Officially at Bradley International, 12.3" was received, setting a daily snow record and the all-time record for biggest snowstorm in the month of October. **NL**

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Fall in love with Decorating

How to give your home an autumnal feeling

by Sloan Brewster
Staff Writer

As the hot days of summer pass behind, add a little warmth to the home.

Carolyn Leining-Lombardi of CT Interior Solutions, in Newington, just started changing some of her decor for fall, she said in a phone call Sept. 13. The tricks she used are ones that anyone can duplicate.

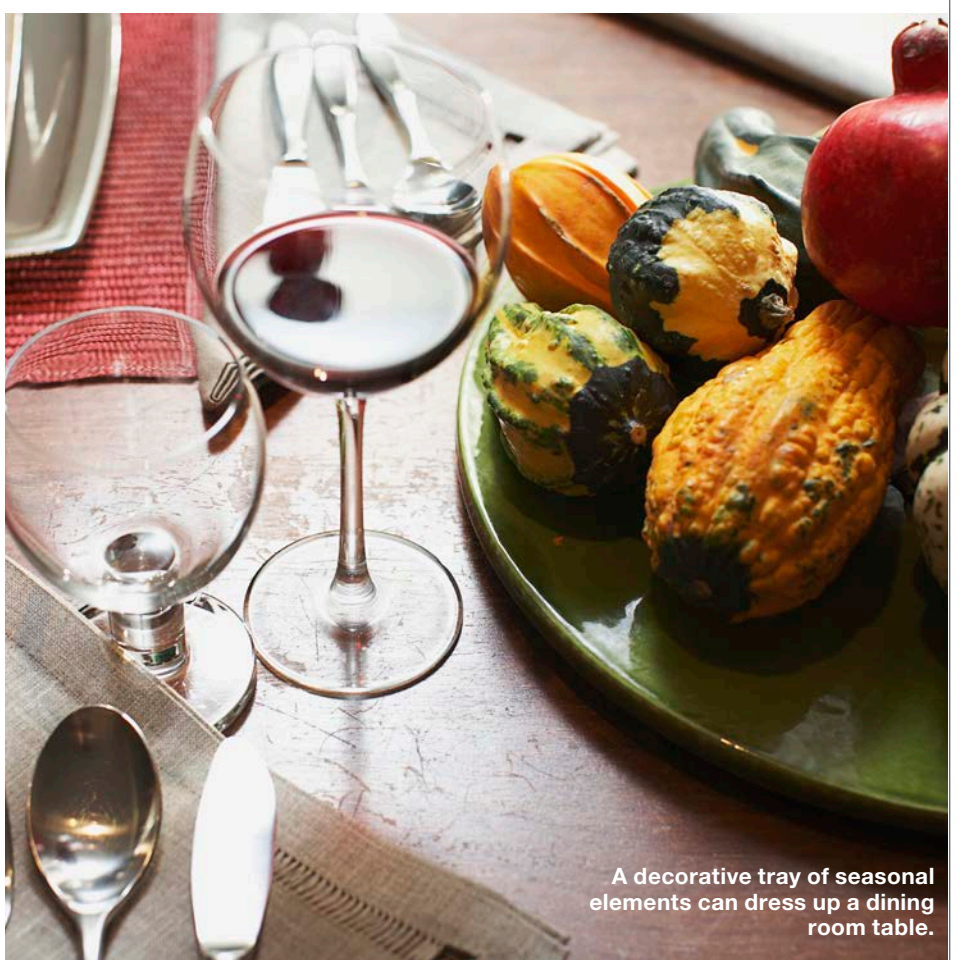
"The coloring all changed," she said. "It's going from very, very light lemony, that cooler feeling for the summer, to warmer tones."

For instance, in place of lemons in a glass vase on the sideboard in her dining room, she put apples and pears.

Across from the vase of apples and pears, she had another vase that she filled with dark red hydrangeas. Next to that, she placed a white candle designed with apples embedded in the wax in a Tuscan pillar candle holder, which she changed from a holder with a summer design and a cool colored candle.

"It kind of pulls it all together," she said of the candle and holder.

On her dining room table, she



A decorative tray of seasonal elements can dress up a dining room table.

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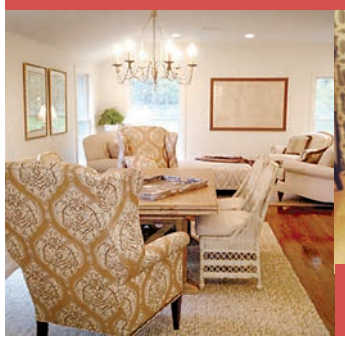

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put a decorative tray with light green artichokes, apples and pears, then for fun, in the very center of the tray, she added an old fashioned bicycle made of iron with a bright red seat to pull it all together, she said.

"Now the coloring of that entire kitchen area has changed," Leining-Lombardi said.

Next, she made some changes to the living room. On her coffee table, she keeps an arrangement of artificial flowers in a blue and white vase. Over the summer the flowers were "white, light and flowy," she said.

For fall, she kept the white ones and added pieces of greenery with purple beads and red roselike flowers.

She is also planning to change her throw pillows to include some warmer fall shades.

"It's tiny little things that are so small," she said of how to make season to

Putting leaves in a lantern with a candle, swapping out decorative plates for ones sporting fall colors and designs and changing pot holders all bring in warmer autumn shades.

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season alterations.

Simple ideas to add a nice autumn look that Leining-Lombardi suggested others try included putting leaves in a lantern with a candle, swapping out decorative plates for ones sporting fall colors and designs and changing pot holders to sets in warmer autumn shades.

"It doesn't mean that you have to go out and buy all new pieces of furniture," she said.

"Smaller pieces can be reinvented to reflect the season.

In her home, she has a place holder hanging on the wall, into which she slides a decorative plate, one that she changes with the time of year.

"That's so easy to change, that could be changed in a blink," Leining-Lombardi said. "And they could be changed at Christmas to Christmas plates that you like."

In summer, Leining-Lombardi removes pads from her chairs but in the winter, she puts them back on.

"Just the idea of material, as opposed to wood itself, will warm it up as well," she said.

In her bedroom, she was planning to retain the white core and change the pillows to shades of gold and blue.

"Blue, white and gold looks very striking together," she said. "Right now, it looks very summery, which is what I wanted."

As she did in other rooms, she was also going to swap out candles and candle holders for darker shades. She also planned to change the lamp in the bedroom.

"It's very little, but it just changes the look," she said.

As the temperatures drop, Leining-Lombardi said she may also add a fur throw and pillow.

"It's fur, it's warm, but that'll be more in late October when it's starting to get chilly

A few shifts outdoors add to the overall look, Leining-Lombardi added. She recommended the usual mums and adding lanterns with tea lights.

"They go on at the end of the day so that creates warmth as well," she said.

An ornamental plant to incorporate in the fall is a flowering cabbage.

"It looks like a head cabbage," she said. "Pretty greenery adds a nice touch and can even be brought into a home and put in a pot."

Of course at this time of year, there are pumpkins galore and they're not all orange.

"There are all kinds of pumpkins out there that you can buy," she said. "I'm not particularly fond of orange in my home, but white, the ones that look like vines."

She even had ideas for those whose homes are decorated in colors that generally clash with fall tones. For example, in a home with a lot of pink, add some gray to bring in fall.

"Pink and gray can be worked well together," she said. "Different shades of gray that would warm it up."

Gail Bantle, design consultant from RLF Home in Hartford, recommends adding decorative pillows in fall colors and changing window treatments and bedding.

In summer use brighter colors.

"In autumn, in winter, you want the darker, warmer tones because you want it to be cozy," Bantle said.

Table linens, runners and placemats in the right shades will also bring that warm feeling needed for fall, she said.

Some homeowners change the rugs in front of the sink or change knick-knacks throughout the house based on the time of year or holiday.

"Go to a craft store and pick up some really fun things and place them throughout," she said. "Easy, inexpensive ways to add fall feeling." **NL**

Outside the home, wreaths and he usual mums and pumpkins will do the trick

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TOP USES FOR PUMPKINS THIS SEASON

by Kaitlin McCallum
Assistant Editor

October in Connecticut means lovely crisp air, sweaters, apples and beautiful orange pumpkins on every doorstep. And while carving a traditional jagged-tooth grin and popping a candle inside is an acceptable Halloween option, there's so much more potential locked in the ubiquitous pumpkin. Here are eight of your best options.

Decorate

Pumpkins are beautiful and, paired with mums, make an obvious fall decoration.

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Lisa Gilbert of the Gilbert Farm in Rocky Hill says most people just place them on their doorstep as a welcoming celebration of fall.

Beyond that, they can also be paired with hay bales and cornstalks, Gilbert said.

"Sometimes I've seen people use gourds and a mixture of pumpkins and they layer them to get a piled effect for a fall display," she said.

Gilbert said many customers line the front steps of their homes with different sizes and colors of pumpkins, taking advantage of the many varieties now offered.

"Something new that's been all the rage in Pennsylvania and New England is a stackable pumpkin. You take three different sizes or colored pumpkins and stack them on top of each other. You use a flatter pumpkin for the bottom and the top one is a rounder one," Gilbert said.

"That's something new that's been trending the past few years or so, but has not yet caught on around here."

And for those houses that have crown molding around the door, tiny sugar pumpkins make a cute decoration, Gilbert said.

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Use as a serving vessel

Decorating with pumpkins can extend to your dinner table. Kathi Martin, owner of Brown's Harvest in Windsor, recommends using them as a serving vessel.

"We will hollow out a bigger pumpkin and use it as a vessel to serve chili or pumpkin soup or set in a liner and do apple cider," Martin said. "There's no harm in not putting in a liner, but any kind of jar or container that would fit inside would be fine."

You could also use smaller pumpkins as individual serving bowls for a dinner party.

Make a face mask

Once you've hollowed out your pumpkins, you can add their insides to your beauty routine.

"On the beauty end of it, you can do a pumpkin peel mask," Martin said. "They're loaded with enzymes and Vitamins A, C and E."

After mixing the pureed contents of one small pumpkin with a few teaspoons of honey and a few teaspoons of milk, apply gently, let sit 20 minutes, wash off and follow with a moisturizer.

Roast the seeds

"It's a very healthy fruit for you," Martin said. "You can use the seeds. Toast them or roast them and between the seeds and the flesh, you're getting lots of different vitamins." To roast the seeds, toss with

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some oil of your choice, sprinkle with sea salt and roast in the oven in a single layer for 45 minutes at 300 degrees.

Bake the fruit

Casseroles, pies, breads and soups are all delicious made with fresh pumpkin, but at Brown's Harvest, Mrs. Brown's pumpkin praline pie is the family's favorite recipe.

"My mom has a recipe for the best pie ever," Martin said. "If you are willing to do a few steps, it is the best. She'll make it a few times and we'll save her a few sugar pumpkins for her to make it at Christmastime."

Find the recipe at www.brownsharvest.com under the recipe's tab.

Carve them

Carving jack-o-lanterns is a popular tradition, with many people opting for electric or battery-operated candles to reduce fire hazard. To keep them looking nice, Martin recommends waiting to carve pumpkins until a day or two before Halloween.

"Some people use vegetable oil or some kind of protectant to preserve it or soak it overnight in water if it starts to shrivel," Martin said. "You could also put in a tiny bit of bleach to keep the bugs away."

Use as a planter to put flowers in

Gilbert said recently she has seen people hollowing out pumpkins to use as planters, too. Seasonal flowers, like mums, which are available at most local farms now, are a good choice to plant in pumpkins for a fall look. To plant, simply cut a large hole at the top, hollow out the insides and poke a few drainage holes in the bottom. Flowers can be planted directly into the pumpkin, filled, two-thirds full with dirt, or just slide a pot into the pumpkin. The pumpkin itself can eventually be planted into the ground, if desired.

Feed the wildlife

When you're absolutely through with your pumpkins, carved or not, you can pass them on as a snack for wildlife. At Gilbert Farm, extra pumpkins are fed to the livestock, but backyard animals are just as happy to eat them.

"Deer love pumpkins. If there are any pumpkins left out in the field, the wildlife will definitely go in and eat them. It's a good source of protein, so if people get done decorating with them they can put them out in their yards. They could dispose of them in their compost pile and between what the wildlife does and Mother Nature does, they will definitely break down," Gilbert said.

"It's such a beautiful fruit that comes in so many different colors and sizes and people love decorating with them," Martin said. "It's just prolonging the colors of the season into fall. In terms of eating pumpkins, there are so many uses beside seeds and pureeing it for soup, pumpkin butter, pumpkin bread. The uses are endless, really." NL

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